



Public Arts



City of Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin Permitting Improvement Project

Final Report
June 18, 2007



Workforce Housing

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1. Executive Summary

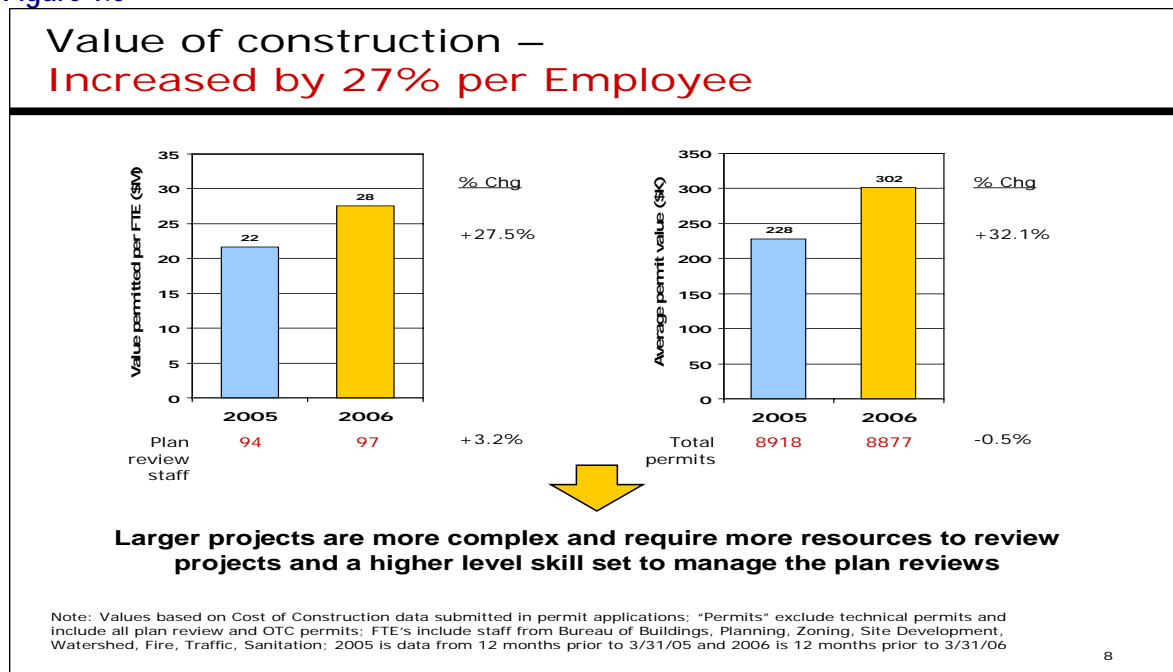
Mayor Shirley Franklin's vision is for *"Atlanta to be the thriving core of the metropolitan area - The most successful city in the Southeast - A competitive city nationally and internationally."* Many people agree with Mayor Franklin - Atlanta is booming! According to 'Expansion Management magazine, Atlanta ranks number 3 out of America's 50 Hottest Cities and Fortune magazine ranks Atlanta number 3 for the most Fortune 500 Headquarters. Also, according to Kiplinger/Person Finance Atlanta is number 4 out of "50 Smart Places to Live."

These reasons and many more are why, over the last decade, metro Atlanta experienced phenomenal growth with total employment increasing by almost 30 percent. According to the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, in 2005, the metro Atlanta region gained more than 69,000 net new jobs, ranking the area in the top five in the country for job creation.

In Atlanta, the population is expected to increase dramatically by 300,000 people or, by 62%, by 2030. Fulton County recorded the highest number of new housing permits in 2005 out of all the other counties in Metro-Atlanta which indicates the anticipated move of people returning to urban in-town living. To accommodate a booming population, each year, for the past ten years, metro Atlanta has led the nation in the number of new housing permits issued, ranking ahead of such cities as New York, Phoenix, Houston, Dallas, Chicago and Miami. This ranking continues a 14-year trend in which metro Atlanta topped the country in issuance of new housing permits for each consecutive year since 1991. Over the last five years in Atlanta, New Residential permits have increased by 160%; New Multi-Family has increased by 94% and New Commercial permits have increased by 174%.

This boom has had a dramatic impact on the City's ability to process building permits in a timely, efficient and cost effective manner (see figure 1.0) showing the impact of cost of construction by employee). Larger projects, such as New Commercial and New Multi-Family, tend to be much more complex and, therefore, can require more time consuming reviews, significantly impacting the City's ability to process buildings permits quickly to promote economic development.

Figure 1.0



According to U.S. Census estimates, the total valuation for residential construction increased by 7.3 percent between 2004 and 2005 in the metro Atlanta area. In Atlanta alone, the number of permits issued in 2006 over 2000 increased by 15%, and the reported cost of construction increased by 67% at \$3.3 billion dollars. That is out of the \$13 billion estimate for total private construction valuation in Metro-Atlanta.

With the dramatic increases in population growth and the expected expansion of economic development in Atlanta, Mayor Franklin accepted Bain and Company's proposal to implement pro-bono research and develop a New Century Economic Development Plan (EDP). The plan would research and recommend goals to boost economic development and the City's ability to implement the recommendations. The major focus was on economic opportunity, healthy neighborhoods and quality of life as well as physical infrastructure required to meet these objectives.

New Century Economic Development Plan

In December of 2004, the EDP was presented to Mayor Franklin by Bain and Company. The plan set 7 aggressive targets to boost economic development.

Of the 7 targets, 6 targets (highlighted in bold) were directly or indirectly affected by building permitting processes:

- **Create 60,000 new jobs in the City of Atlanta**
(an increase of 14%, 3% annually; requires a faster annual growth rate than in the surrounding metro area)
- ***Create 24,000 new metro jobs related to airport growth and expansion***
(an increase of 23%, 4% annually)
- ***Grow Property value in the City by \$26B by adding households and leased commercial space***
(an increase of 62%, 8% annually)
- ***Add 20,000 new workforce housing units by use of City incentives***
(a 50% increase in the current construction rate)
- **Decrease the City's crime rate to 5,600 crimes per 100,000 residents**
(a decrease of more than 50%, 10% annually)
- **Increase the high school completion rate of Atlanta Public School students to 72%**
(an increase of 25%)
- ***Add 1,900 acres of dedicated parks and greenspace to the City***
(an increase of 56%)

Ten initiatives were designed to achieve the EDP; of which, 5 targets were directly (highlighted) affected by building permitting processes:

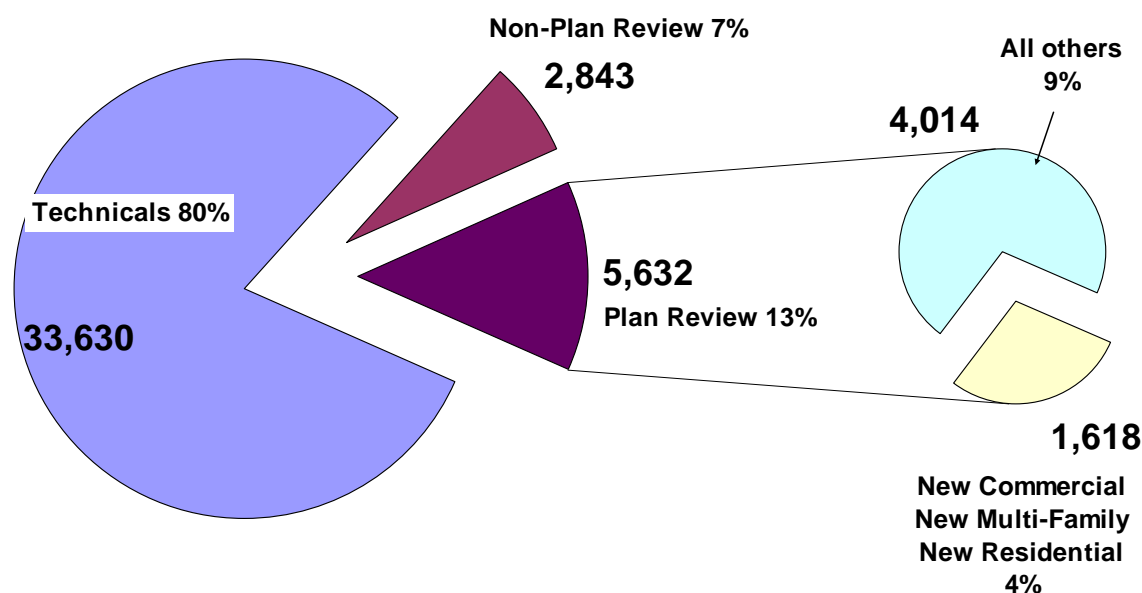
- ***Support of growth of industries***
- ***Create and grow business recruitment, retention, and expansion capabilities***
- ***Champion the Beltline Project and Downtown as major development areas***
- ***Increase economic vitality of underserved areas***
- ***Make it easier to develop in Atlanta***
- ***Increase workforce housing***
- ***Increase capital available for development and business growth***
- **Make Atlanta one of America's safest cities**
- **Collaborate to improve the graduation rates in Atlanta Public Schools**
- **Grow dedicated parks and greenspace**

Bain Report - Permitting Improvement Action Plan

Upon completion of the New Century Economic Development Plan, anecdotes indicated that the City of Atlanta's building permitting process did not fully promote development in the city. In addition, the permitting process has been under constant scrutiny and multiple improvement efforts have had varying degrees of success.

The critical concerns expressed by community members were related to the extended length of time it took the City to issue permits. In 2004, the City of Atlanta issued over 42,000 permits of 72 different types, from small to complex (see figure 1.1). The continued growth of the City and the increased complexity in the permitting operations, coupled with the expanded development in denser areas, called for an immediate review of the permitting operations. In addition, the City was confronted by legal challenges from the Home Builders Association regarding its ability to perform the residential permits issuance process in an efficient manner.

Figure 1.1 – Permits Issued 2004



The Bain analysis concluded that the plan review process was complex and required too many steps for the customer. Up to 21 days may be included in the time to permit just to move the plans through each permitting division. Recommendations were made to improve the City's internal ability to define and track the bottlenecks in the permitting process. ATLStat measures (a dashboard monitoring performance indicators) were recommended to be established to track: total permits by type, projects complexity, time to completion for each plan review area, total time to permit, quality of work performed, and data integrity. All results would be transparent for the public and measurements of the projects performance communicated to the public.

In an effort to effectively respond to these issues, Mayor Franklin requested the assistance of Bain and Company to perform an assessment of the Bureau of Buildings and permitting processes, and formulate recommendations for improvements.

Bain and Company interviewed members of the local development community, employees involved in the permitting process across several City divisions, as well as residents utilizing the services. In addition, Bain consultants interviewed numerous external stakeholders including developers and officials from other cities. Their research provided an in-depth analysis of challenges for the City of Atlanta's permitting processes. Bain used the following example of some of the detriments to economic development in the City (Data 2004).

Early Learning Property Management (ELPM) developed three properties outside the City of Atlanta versus renovating three abandoned schools within the City of Atlanta. They selected the City of Decatur, Paulding County, and Gwinnett County. They selected locations outside of the City of Atlanta because of the long duration of Atlanta's permitting process:

- City of Atlanta: 30-40 weeks
- Gwinnett County: 16-24 weeks
- Paulding County: 6-8 weeks
- City of Decatur: 4-6 weeks

Atlanta's seven to ten month process represents one school year of lost services:

One-time Atlanta construction costs:

- \$15M in architectural and construction costs
- Sales taxes on materials
- Permitting and impact fees

Ongoing Atlanta losses:

- Affordable preschool services
- Property tax revenues
- \$4.5-6M annual operating budget (120 jobs)
- Atlanta Public Schools retain un-leased properties and Atlanta Police maintain increased patrols of the vacant facilities

Several critical enablers to improvements were outlined:

1. Lack of a comprehensive AtIStat and dashboard outcomes measurement process would make the improvement implementation more challenging.
2. A pending lawsuit by the Homebuilders Association had been filed due to the excess of building permit fees not being used to maintain and improve the building permitting process. Dealing with this legal issue could result in a major financial drawback and implementation delays.
3. Complex zoning regulations required extensive staff research and review. Zoning regulations would need streamlining which would require a lengthy legal review, public input and approval process, and final support by City Council.
4. The leadership structure going into the Permitting Improvement Project within the primary bureau, the Bureau of Buildings had been constant over more than 20 years and because of this, process changes would require a cultural shift for process improvements to be integrated.

Recommendations by Bain and Company

Bain and Company's efforts resulted in more than 100 improvement recommendations. The final report proposed 32 improvement initiatives for implementation during 2005 and 2006. The objectives for the Permitting Improvement Project included:

- Reduce real or perceived complexity of Atlanta's building permitting process
- Reduce time to execute current processes
- Improve technology to facilitate the process
- Improve customer perception of the process
- Improve performance relative to surrounding municipalities
- Improve investor confidence in real estate development in the City of Atlanta
- Drive greater growth in the City of Atlanta

These objectives targeted three broad areas of opportunity:

- Customer Satisfaction: Customer outreach, education, and satisfaction
- Business Process Improvements: Improvement of permitting business processes and permit issuance
- Technology Improvements and existing Technology Upgrades

Customer Satisfaction

Consumer outreach and education and customer satisfaction were defined as key to the perception of time to permit. Employee satisfaction and training would be extremely important to the implementation and execution to process improvements.

To improve customer outreach and education, recommendations included creating simple to understand communication materials such as a permitting primer. Bain recommended that the City consider providing workshops for developers, architects, engineers and individual home builders and renovators to communicate the improvements. To promote the City's improvements to the development community, Bain recommended constituting a stakeholders group in addition to City personnel actively engaging in building associations such as the Atlanta Builders Association. To ensure customer satisfaction would be benchmarked and monitored for improvements, Bain recommended that a Customer Satisfaction Survey be completed by a 3rd party at the beginning and at the end of the project in addition to forming customer satisfaction focus groups.

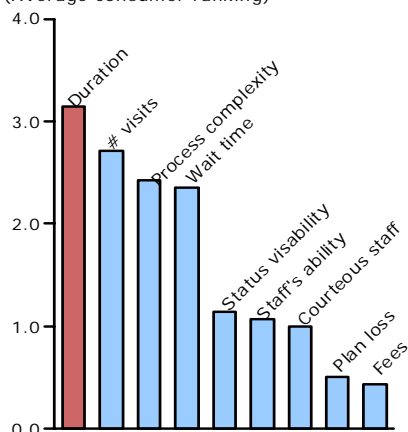
To improve on customer satisfaction, Bain also recommended the City hire additional greeters and customer service representatives to manage the enormous amount of foot traffic and phone calls that the departments receive on a daily basis.

The most significant observation made by Bain concerning customer concerns was the process duration of 'time to permit' (see figure 1.2). Technology and business process improvements were the focus in order to reduce the time to permit.

Figure 1.2

Permit applicants complain about many issues, but are most concerned about process duration

What should the city focus on to improve the permitting process?
(Average consumer ranking)



"I can get a permit in Charlotte in 45 days, in Dallas it takes 10 working days, and in Tampa it takes 30 days even with a Hurricane blowing through. Why can't Atlanta do it in under four months?"

- Developer

"The Bureau of Buildings has lost my plans on several occasions and last time I helped them dig them out of a pile of papers stacked six feet high in the middle of their hallway."

- Commercial developer

"I couldn't begin to say how many visits we made or how long [plans were] with our architect. This project took us four years to get through the Bureau of Planning."

- Commercial owner's rep

"The people are so rude I can't deal with them anymore and so I've hired a full time plan runner."

- Owner's rep

Source: Sample permit recipient interviews, N=14

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Business Process Improvements

The organizational structure of the BOB was analyzed and compared to comparable cities across the U.S. Assistant Director positions were recommended to add an additional layer of management between the Director and staff to help oversee the day-to-day operations of the Bureau. An Assistant Director of Permitting Services and an Assistant Director of Inspections were recommended in addition to the existing Assistant Director of Plan Review.

A review of staff positions was considered and Bain recommended building staff primarily in the plan review areas. Atlanta compared to similar cities fell short by an average of 11 positions for plan reviews. Hiring additional inspectors and customer service representatives were also recommended.

Employee training was another area that Bain focused on stating that "City of Atlanta staff believed that training investment is essential and could increase efficiencies". The challenge would be time, trainers and financial resources required for training.

The review process was not managed well nor was it done expeditiously. Plan review time was exceedingly long (see figures 1.3 and 1.4). Several recommendations and resulting observations included: Pre-approve standard plan types, conduct plan review by appointment, improve revision resourcing, separate difficult from simpler plan review projects, hold pre-development meetings, and redesign BOB space and integrate other divisions into the same physical space.

Figure 1.3

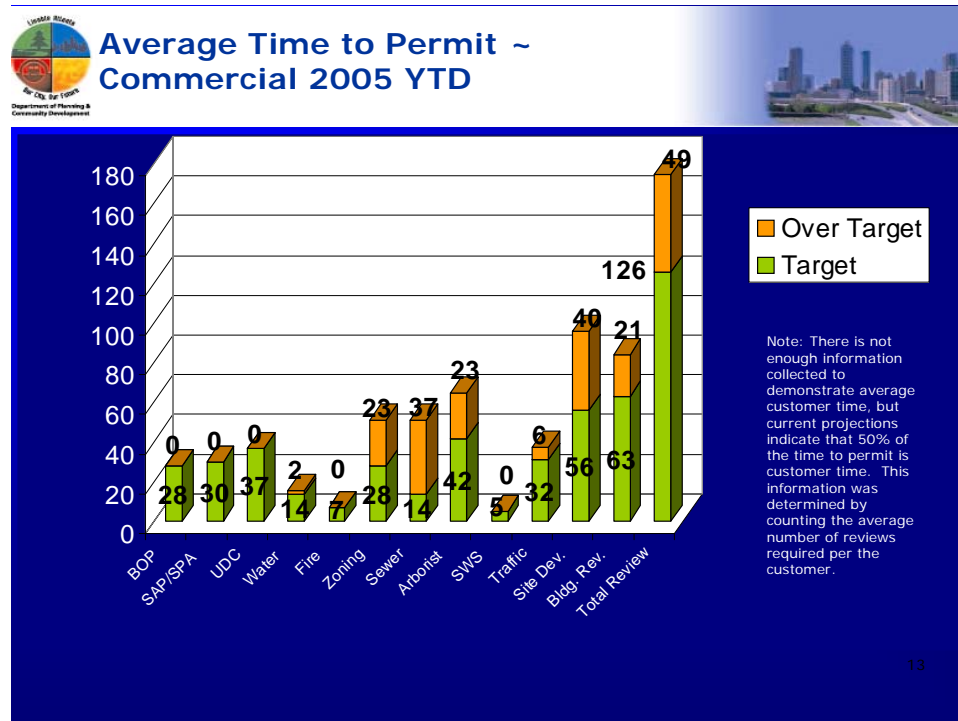
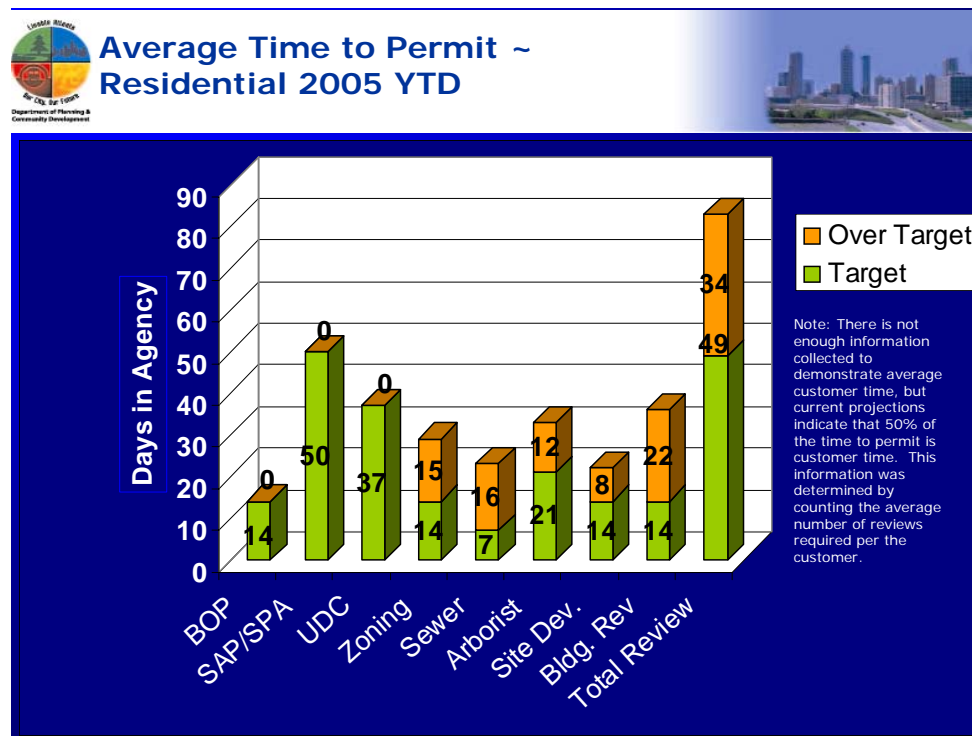


Figure 1.4



Technology Improvements

A major area of concern was the manual labor involved vs. technically advanced processes. Permits were processed and maintained manually in the Kiva database. Bain highly recommended moving as many permits as possible to online transactions. This improvement would reduce process time and time to permit in addition to reducing the number of personal customer interactions and foot traffic that the Bureau experienced.

Zoning reviews were also done manually. Because most zoning reviews included reviewing large mylar maps in various locations and were neither entirely accurate nor efficient, moving to an online GIS zoning verification was highly recommended. However, the database, or Land File, that consisted of more than 140,000 records, would need to be accurate before this could occur.

The payment process for the customer was very laborious. A customer may have to return 7-8 times to pay permit fees before receiving a Certificate of Occupancy (CO), thus Bain recommended moving this process to an online, combined payment process.

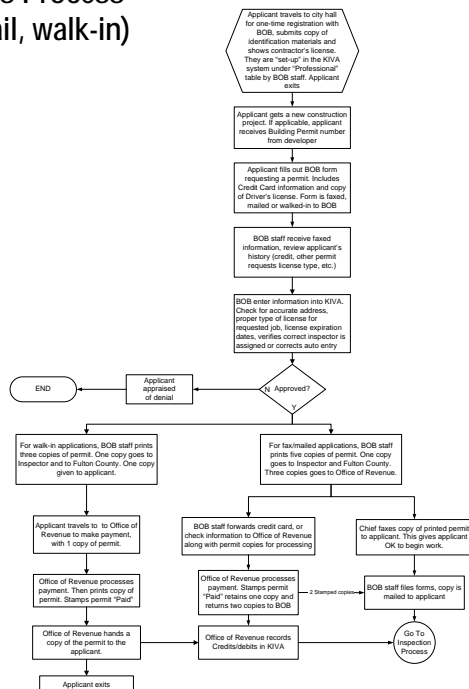
Other online service recommendations included business licenses, sign permits, tree removal applications, digital submittal of plan review and/or plan tracking, automatic email functionality and online viewing of the zoning code.

An example of technology improvements recommended to improve efficiencies and reduce the City's time to permit was to move to online processing. Technical permits accounted for approximately 80% of all permits. By making this improvement the City saved more than 7,000 hours in labor and avoided resources costing more than \$170,000 per year (see figure 1.5).

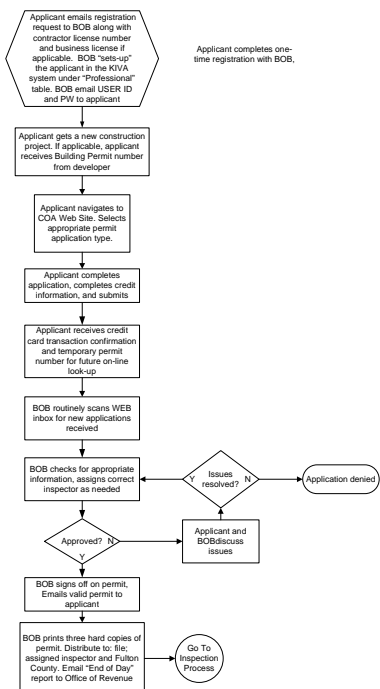
Figure 1.5

Technical Permits – Previous vs. Improved Process

Previous Process (fax, mail, walk-in)



New Online Process



Implementation Strategy

To accomplish these objectives on April 4, 2005, Luz Borrero, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, was appointed to direct the two-year implementation project, utilizing the report's recommendations and transforming those into an actionable plan.

To ensure that the deliverables for the two-year project were met, a Project Management Team was established composed of key internal stakeholders. In addition, an external advisory group was formed: the Permitting Improvement Project Stakeholders Group, which was led by A. J. Robinson, President of Central Atlanta Progress. These two groups undertook different levels of effort that converged in the development of a plan of action to streamline the City's permitting processes utilizing measurable goals and internal milestones.

First Year Objectives and Accomplishments

Under Luz Borrero's leadership, the Permitting Improvement Project Team set up employee teams to refine the research findings, make recommendations for implementation, and guide actionable items through completion.

The internal teams constituted were:

1. Facility Improvements
2. Communications
3. Customer Service
4. Training
5. Major Projects
6. Land File Cleanup
7. On-Line Permitting
8. Kiva Upgrade
9. Field Operations Automation
10. Legal
11. Business Processes Improvements

The first year of the project focused on mapping existing business processes and implementing immediate changes to maximize short-term benefits. These included changes and upgrades to the basic technology infrastructure, such as Kiva upgrades and enhancements, design and development of ATLStat reports and reporting structure, implementation of customer satisfaction baseline survey, moving all Technical permits and general repair permits to online (87% of all permits), clean up of the Land File (147,000 records), restructure the Bureau of Buildings, restructure and add internal positions, and assess employee skill sets with functional requirements to develop and implement proper training mechanisms for employees.

A significant amount of effort was dedicated in the first year to personnel changes and management practices required to implement the business process transformation called for by the report. Staffing changes included the recruitment and retention of new leadership including the Commissioner of Planning and Community Development, the Director of the Bureau of Buildings (BOB), Director of Planning, and the Director of Code Compliance. In addition, new assistant director positions were established in the Bureau of Buildings to oversee plan review, permit issuance, and inspections.

First year results included:

- Creation of the ATLStat Performance Measurement System
- Development and implementation of a communications plan
- Clean up of the Kiva database land file (147,000 records)
- Transfer of 87% of permit applications to online processing
- Successful upgrade of Kiva 7.0 to 7.26 and 7.27
- Constitution of a Major Projects Team
- Consolidation of fee payments (from 8 payments to 1 reducing number of trips for customer)
- Improvement to facility design to streamline business operations

One important accomplishment was the completion of a baseline customer satisfaction survey. In the fall of 2005, at the request of the City of Atlanta, Georgia Power Corporation commissioned the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) to conduct surveys of those who have applied for a building permit with the City of Atlanta. The data collected was intended to serve as a baseline allowing the City to measure changes as the City makes improvements to the process. The survey asked about the overall permitting process as well as specific questions about each workgroup/department they may have visited.

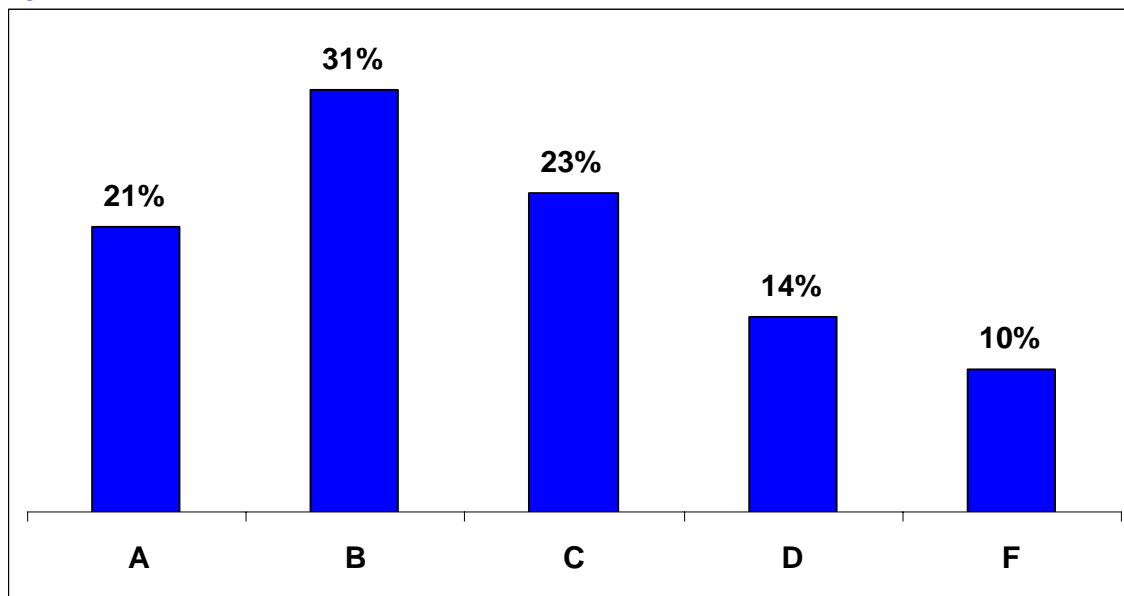
In March 2006, CVIOG completed a 123 page customer service satisfaction survey on the City's time to permit based on a total of 1,002 completed interviews from November to January.

When asked "What grade would you give the City of Atlanta on how they handled your most recent permit application?" A majority of respondents give the City either an "A" or "B" (see figure 1.6). The majority of respondents also stated the staff in each department was courteous.

Areas for concern among respondents included:

- Explanation and assistance with the process
- Timeliness
- Efficiency

Figure 1.6



Second Year Objectives and Accomplishments

During the second year the City initiated a gradual transfer of responsibilities to the newly hired Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Community Development. The Bureau of Buildings was redesigned to a 3 part structure and the City hired a new Director of the Bureau of Buildings and 2 new Assistant Directors; one for Inspections and the other for Permitting Processes. A pre-existing Assistant Director of Building Plan Reviews remained. An Arborist Manager was recruited and new positions were added in the Arborist Division.

The Project Team took the recommendations for business process reviews from the first year and implemented new business processes including concurrent plan review. Technical improvements included another Kiva upgrade to 8.02, automatic email notification of permit status, and additional online permit processing. The major challenge of the outstanding lawsuit by the Homebuilders Association was smoothly negotiated. House Bill 1385, passed by the Georgia House, stat that all new residential homes be reviewed within 30 days of the date of application, was implemented. New Residential time to permit was at 28 days to permit.

Another successful outcome resulting from the Permitting Improvement Project is the final approval of revisions made to the City's Tree Ordinance. The origin of Atlanta's tree protection can be traced back to some 40 years ago, but the first stand-alone Tree Protection Ordinance was adopted in 1993. Over the ensuing years, there have been a number of amendments, the most recent of which was in 2007. Unlike most tree protection ordinances in Georgia, the City of Atlanta ordinance applies to new development as well as existing homeowners' requests for tree removals for any purpose including room additions, hazardous trees, or general landscaping needs.

Although the ordinance is intended to protect the tree canopy, until recently, it created a hurdle that could prolong the building permit issuance process and adversely impact development. After several months of public hearings and community meetings, on June 4, 2007, City Council approved major revisions to the Tree Ordinance allowing the continued protection of the City's tree canopy while reducing the time to permit.

Other major second year permitting improvements include:

- Online zoning verification
- Online permit status
- Automatic email notification
- Established Fast Track Permitting Team
- Restructured Inspections Division to add combination inspectors
- Completed online Permitting Primer
- Intensive internal employee education and professional skills training

Update as of May 31, 2007 - Permitting Improvement Project

After 24 months, the project has met a successful conclusion. All 32 initial Bain recommendations have been successfully implemented along with an additional 15 recommendations made by the Project Team.

The significant achievement made was the primary objective, to reduce the time to permit. The City time to permit has been reduced by 50-90% as of the end of May 2007. See figure 6.0 for details by permit type.

Highlighted Permitting Improvement Project Accomplishments

Customer Satisfaction

- Hired Customer Service Manager, support staff, and consolidated customer service reps
- Baseline Customer Satisfaction Survey Completed
- Online Comprehensive Permitting Primer
- Held 8 Successful Developers' Day Workshops and Created Educational Documents Online
- Significant Culture Shift resulting in Customer Service Satisfaction
- Intensive Internal Employee Education and Professional Skills Training

Business Process Improvements

- New Leadership: Commissioner of DPCD, Director of Bureau of Buildings, Bureau of Planning, Bureau of Code Compliance
- Reorganized Bureau of Buildings into a 3 part structure and created and hired 2 new Assistant Directors, Arborist Manager and Plan Reviewer, and additional Building Plan Reviewers
- Development of ATL Stats
- Consolidation of Payments (7 steps to 1 step)
- Constituted Major Projects Team to monitor all major project applications
- Established Fast Track Permitting Team for faster processing of residential permit applications
- Outsource of Building Plan Review
- Hired 4 Combination Inspectors
- Redesigned Facilities to Streamline Operations
- Implemented Concurrent Plan Review

Technology Improvements

- Kiva Upgrade from 7.0 to 8.02 (required 3 upgrades)
- Moved 87% of all permits to online processing (all Technical and General Repair permits)
- Land File Clean up (147,000 records researched and 32,851 updated)
- Online Zoning Verification
- Online Permit Status
- Automatic Email Notification

Figure 1.7 - Time to Permit Scorecard as of May 31, 2007

Permit Type	2005 Actual Days	2006 Actual Days	2007 Actual Days	June '07 Goal
NEW RESIDENTIAL	83	52	28	30
RESIDENTIAL - REMODELING	6	1	0	5
RESIDENTIAL - ADDITIONS	39	50	20	21
MULTI-FAMILY	215	91	113	110
NEW COMMERCIAL	147	247	57	70
COMMERCIAL - GENERAL REPAIRS	10	4	5	7
COMMERCIAL - TENANT IMPROVEMENTS	9	7	1	5

Our Vision – Next Steps

The City of Atlanta has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years, more particularly since the hosting of the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. There is an anticipated boom in population growth in Atlanta of 300,000 people or, by 62%, by 2030.

The City of Atlanta's successful completion of the Permitting Improvement Project has provided a new and efficient permitting process that will contribute to a strong foundation for continued economic development in Atlanta. Development practices as well as City goals and objectives continue to change and improvements to the permitting processes are critical to advancing economic development and Mayor Franklin's vision that *"Atlanta will be the thriving core of the metropolitan area - The most successful city in the southeast - A competitive city, nationally and internationally"*.

The Department of Planning and Community Development is also focused on Mayor Franklin's vision of several major projects that will transform the urban core of the City by managing future growth and creating sustainable communities.

- **Atlanta's BeltLine: Atlanta's New Public Realm**
Ideally located approximately 1 to 3 miles from downtown, the BeltLine will convert 22 miles of underutilized or abandoned railroad corridors and more than 2,900 acres of underutilized residential, commercial, and industrial land into a continuous system of transit and greenways.
- **The Peachtree Corridor:** <http://www.peachtreecorridor.com>
The Peachtree Corridor is two miles longer than Manhattan Island. Spanning 14.5 miles, the corridor stretches through the heart of Atlanta. More than a quarter million people travel to the corridor every day. The Peachtree Corridor represents both the center of Atlanta's existing economic strength and one of the greatest opportunities for further economic development and commercial activity.

To execute Mayor Franklin's dynamic vision, the Department of Planning and Community Development is developing the Atlanta Strategic Action Plan (ASAP), formerly known as the Comprehensive Development Plan. The ASAP will build upon previous planning efforts and initiatives addressing many issues targeting a 20+ year time frame to 2030. The plan will include population projections, economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, community services and facilities, intergovernmental coordination, transportation and land use and many other important strategies and policies to plan for Atlanta's future in a responsible and coordinated way.

To execute Mayor Franklin's dynamic vision and to effectively manage the anticipated demand on the Bureau of Buildings and the City's permitting operations, The Department of Planning and Community Development is in the process of implementing strategies in preparation for future demand of more permit applications, along with our continued desire to improve our level of customer service, increase our efficiencies, and reduce the time to permit. The following initiatives will support this vision:

The Department of Planning and Community Development has already begun implementing strategies in preparation for future demand of more permit applications including:

- Atlanta Strategic Action Plan (ASAP)
- One-Stop Shop Permitting Facility
- Revising and Simplifying the Zoning Ordinance
- Implementing Digital Submittal of Plans and Plan Review
- GIS – Online Zoning Map and Interactive Layers
- Field Operations Automation
- Upgrading Permit Issuance Technology from Kiva to Accela Automation
- Implement Permit Shopping Cart
- Co-location of Permitting Reviewers to BOB
- Transportation Master Plan:

The City has also initiated the 2nd customer satisfaction survey to verify with customer's that their building permitting experience has improved to their satisfaction and that the permitting process is efficient, timely, and transacted with excellent customer service.

Our 'One Stop Permitting Center' is also underway in the planning stages. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) panel has recommended implementing a one stop permitting center possibly utilizing the property across from City Hall at 104 Trinity Ave. Financing mechanisms for potential implementation is currently under review.

All of these initiatives that Mayor Franklin has put in place will provide the tools that Atlanta needs as we experience dramatic growth and economic development while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life Atlantan's have come to appreciate.

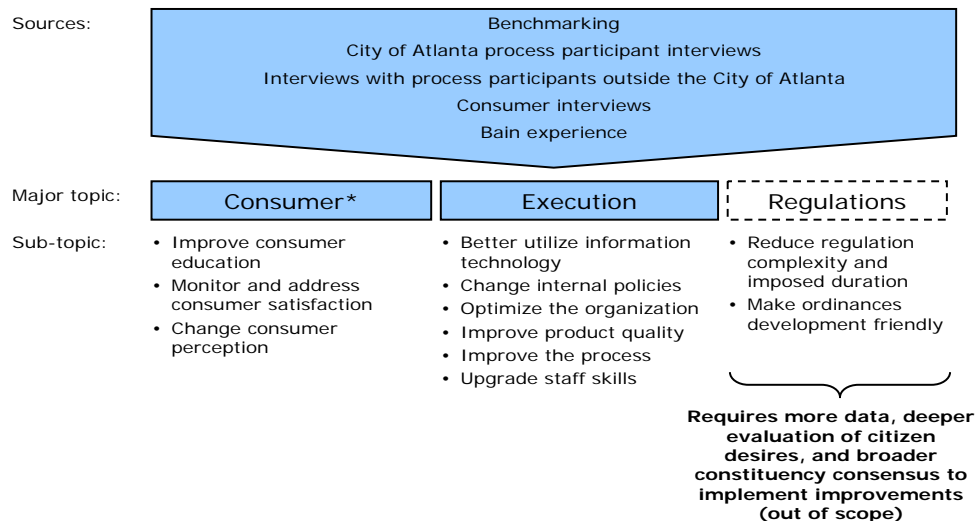
2. Bain Report – Permitting Improvement Action Plan

2.1 Overall Observations and Recommendations

Bain and Company interviewed members of the local development community, employees involved in the permitting process across several City divisions, as well as residents utilizing the services. In addition, Bain consultants interviewed numerous external stakeholders including developers and officials from other cities. Their research provided an in-depth analysis of challenges for the City of Atlanta's permitting processes (see figure 2.1.0). Bain and Company's efforts resulted in more than 100 improvement recommendations.

Figure 2.1.0

More than one hundred potential improvements were identified in three main areas



Note: (*) Consumers include all permit applicants

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These potential initiatives were prioritized across four factors:

1. **Quality:** rating 30% in relative importance
Key measures included process consistency, quality of applications, and compliance with ordinances
2. **Consumer Satisfaction:** rating 30% in relative importance
Key measures included reduction in permit duration, reduction in visits to attain permit, reduction in complexity of the process, reduction in wait times and improvement in consumer perception of process
3. **Development factors:** rating 25% in relative importance
Key measures included number of permit applications impacted, value of the permit applications impacted, number of applicants affected, and influence on projects significant to economic development
4. **Ease of Implementation:** rating 15% in relative importance
Key measures included people and skills available in city government, cost of change, and time to implement.

Experts and process owners assessed feasibility and identified pitfalls of potential initiatives. Process owners included representatives from the Mayor's Office, Department of Planning and Community Development, Department of Watershed Management, Department of Public Works, Atlanta Fire Department and Department of Information Technology. Key stakeholders were defined as the DeKalb County Health Department, Fulton County Health Department, Atlanta Development Authority and Atlanta Committee for Progress.

Benchmark cities were identified and they included:

- Seattle Applicant Services Center
- Cleveland Department of Building and Housing
- Denver Building Dept.
- Charlott-Mecklenburg Code Enforcement
- Miami Dade County Building Dept.
- St. Louis Building Division

Results of conversations with stakeholders and research led Bain to recommend 32 prioritized and agreed upon initiatives. The most significant observation made by Bain concerning customer concerns was the process duration of 'time to permit'. To reduce the time to permit and promote excellent customer service, 32 initial recommendations were made as follows and are listed by type of initiative.

Customer Satisfaction

1. Education materials: pamphlets, newsletter, how-to packages
2. Formalize pre-meeting between Building Plan Reviewers and Developers
3. Detailed instructions (revision notes): create forms explaining code requirements
4. Customer outreach: attend ABA, AIA, Trade Assoc. meetings and provide seminars
5. Establish stakeholder group
6. Develop and execute professional skills trainings for staff
7. Create a Permitting Primer
8. Consumer policy statement "Consumer Bill of Rights"
9. Conduct consumer focus groups
10. Staff reward program
11. Temporary process concierge: greeter to assist customers
12. Add Intake triage role
13. Monitor satisfaction by telephone and through surveys

Business Process Improvements

14. Three part BOB structure
15. Add additional staff: Inspectors, Plan Reviewers, Customer Service positions
16. Limited plan review function - Hire additional plan reviewers to enable Director/Assist Dir. to manage vs. review plans
17. Institutionalize performance management / Atl Stat and dashboard
18. Redesign BOB Space for short-term, mid-term and long-term need's to accommodate new employees and improvements to business processes
19. Plan intake by appointment
20. Pre-approved standard plan types
21. Red flag for re-submittals
22. Reviewers intake over the counter (OTC) plans
23. Develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for Plan Reviewers
24. Conduct plan review audits

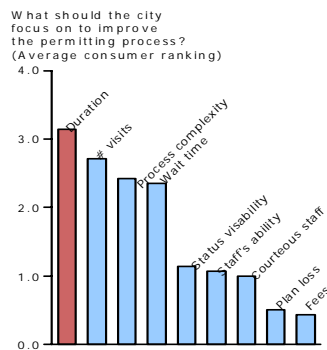
Technology Improvements

25. Clean up and maintain permit databases; define owners and responsibilities
26. Upgrade and utilize upgrade functionality of Kiva (permit data base)
27. Online permitting
28. Add BOB On-Site IT Resources (Kiva Expert)
29. Implement data tracking system
30. Provide permit status online
31. Improve routing methods and hire a Courier
32. Online business license and sign license applications

The most significant observation made by Bain concerning customer concerns was the process duration of 'time to permit' (see figure 2.1.1).

Figure 2.1.1

Permit applicants complain about many issues, but are most concerned about process duration



"I can get a permit in Charlotte in 45 days, in Dallas it takes 10 working days, and in Tampa it takes 30 days even with a Hurricane blowing through. Why can't Atlanta do it in under four months?"

- Developer

"The Bureau of Buildings has lost my plans on several occasions and last time I helped them dig them out of a pile of papers stacked six feet high in the middle of their hallway."

- Commercial developer

"I couldn't begin to say how many visits we made or how long [plans were] with our architect. This project took us four years to get through the Bureau of Planning."

- Commercial owner's rep

"The people are so rude I can't deal with them anymore and so I've hired a full time plan runner."

- Owner's rep

Source: Sample permit recipient interviews, N=14

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1.1.

2.2 Customer Satisfaction: Observations and Recommendations

Consumer outreach and education and customer satisfaction were defined as key to the perception of time to permit. Bain noted that consumers generally lack knowledge about the permitting process.

Figure 2.2.0

In addition, consumers generally lack knowledge about the permitting process

"The [Bureau of Planning] has no procedures and rejected the process checklist that the [Bureau of Buildings] gave me. I'd say I spent three days running between the two not knowing who had the rest of my drawings or what to do next."

-Home owner

"Site development is bigger black box than the [Bureau of Buildings] if you can imagine."

-Commercial developer expeditor

"I couldn't tell you what the start or finish of any [permitting process] step was. I didn't realize there were steps."

-Expeditor for Atlanta Public Schools

"[Applicants] could get their permit faster if they would revise the things we mark up for them. But instead they come back with the same issues four and five times."

-Bureau of Buildings plan reviewer

Consumers lack understanding of the process, including what instructions mean and what are their responsibilities

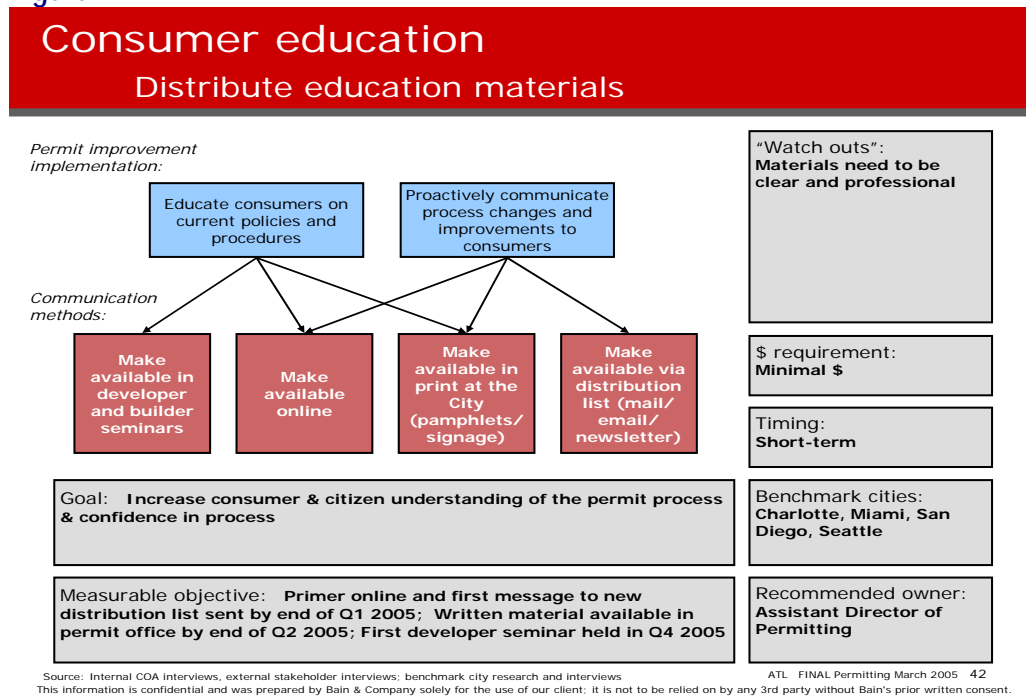
Source: Consumer interviews

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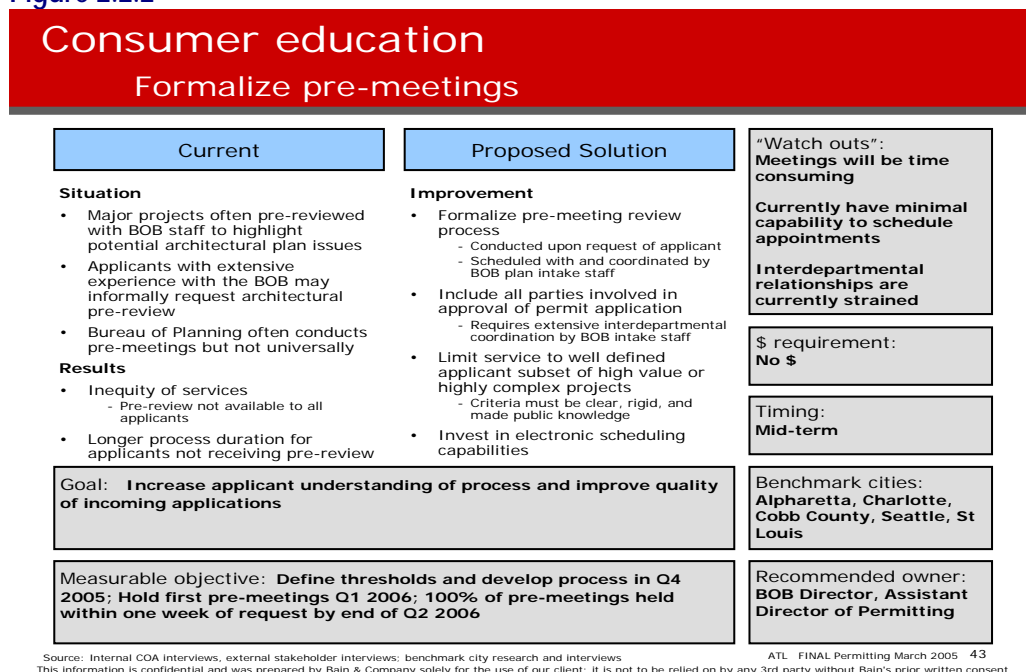
To improve customer outreach and education, recommendations included creating simple to understand communication materials such as a Permitting Primer. Bain recommended that the City consider providing workshops for developers, architects, engineers and individual home builders and renovators to communicate the improvements (see figure 2.2.1).

Figure 2.2.1



Bain then recommended that DPCD formalize pre-meetings with developers. It was observed that pre-meetings did occur but were not universal. With a standard procedure in place, all parties would have an opportunity to be involved in a pre-application review process to note any specific challenges that would hinder the issuance of a permit in a timely manner (see figure 2.2.2).

Figure 2.2.2



The permit application process was cumbersome and the staff reviewing the application did not follow standard procedures nor use standard templates or forms. Notes and instructions were often written comments on the plans and a record of the process was not maintained well. Bain recommended note templates for each process step and a standard protocol for reviews (see figure 2.2.3).

Figure 2.2.3

Consumer education		
Provide detailed revision notes		
Current	Proposed Solution	
Situation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant and process staff discussions conducted mostly in person Notes and instructions are sometimes written & provided to the applicant, but BOB rarely maintains or refers to record of requested changes Result <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple applicant visits and longer process duration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat reviews often performed because notes in KIVA do not detail requested changes Applicants often forget instructions and return unrevised plans 	Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop note templates for each process step Provide detailed written instructions and notes for applicants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop protocol to determine when detailed notes should be provided Keep copies of these notes and instructions for future reference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop system for maintaining and cataloging notes Ensure all prior notes addressed before applications re-accepted for review 	"Watch outs": Time consuming Mechanism to track and catalog notes is not currently in place
		\$ requirement: No \$
		Timing: Short-term
		Benchmark cities:
Goal: Increase applicant knowledge, improve quality of revised plan submissions, increase consumer accountability, increase customer service		Recommended owner: Assistant Director of Permitting
Measurable objective: Note templates (revision instructions, comments, or checklists) developed for every process step by end of Q2 2005		

Source: Internal COA interviews, external stakeholder interviews; benchmark city research and interviews ATL FINAL Permitting March 2005 44
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Bain observed that the permitting management did not focus on customer outreach or in communicating with stakeholders such as the Atlanta Home Builders Association and the American Institute of Architects. The goal to involve the community in the improvement processes would enhance consumer satisfaction and confidence in the process (see figure 2.2.4).

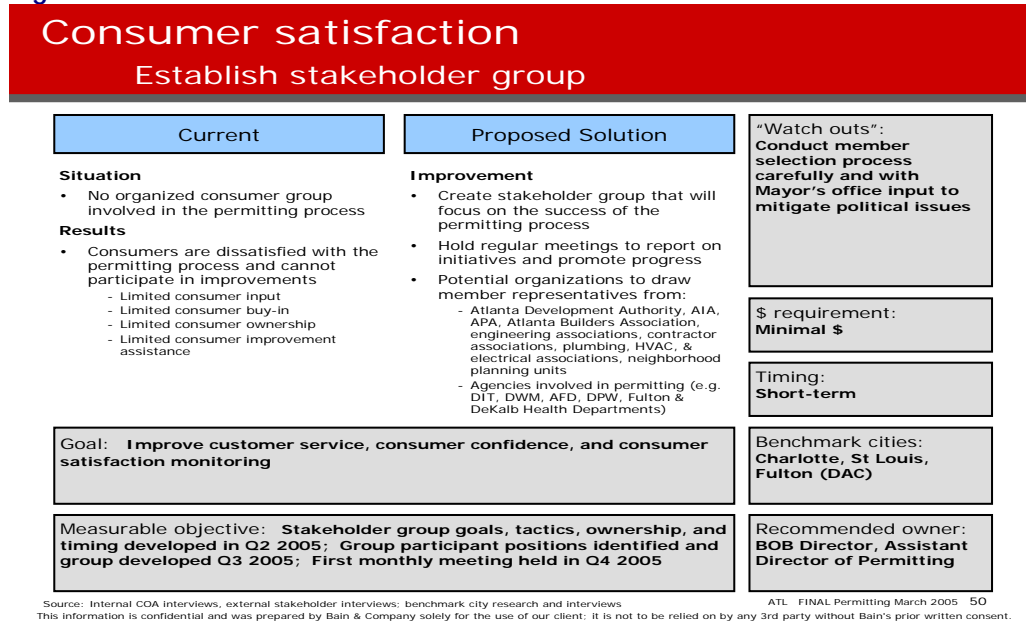
Figure 2.2.4

Consumer satisfaction		
Conduct consumer outreach		
Current	Proposed Solution	
Situation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permitting management has limited communication with community groups, professional associations, and public interest groups Result <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community & association groups develop taskforces to indirectly address permit process issues but are dissatisfied that they cannot impact the process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groups do not have up-to-date process picture or understand current initiatives and constraints Sometimes provide funding to elevate initiatives without internal buy-in resulting in failed or delayed improvement attempts 	Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend meetings of Atlanta consumer groups periodically to better understand their perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AIA, Atlanta Builders Association, etc. Hold periodic meetings with most frequent permit applicants & applicant groups 	"Watch outs": Early meetings will be emotional, volatile, and potentially less productive
		\$ requirement: No \$
		Timing: Short-term
		Benchmark cities: Denver
Goal: Improve consumer satisfaction & confidence, identify process issues sooner rather than later, involve community in improvement process		Recommended owner: BOB Director
Measurable objective: Key consumer groups identified and prioritized in Q1 2005; Schedule developed and attend first professional organization meetings in Q2 2005; Conduct first annual "Frequent Permittees" meeting in Q3 2005		

Source: Internal COA interviews, external stakeholder interviews; benchmark city research and interviews ATL FINAL Permitting March 2005 46
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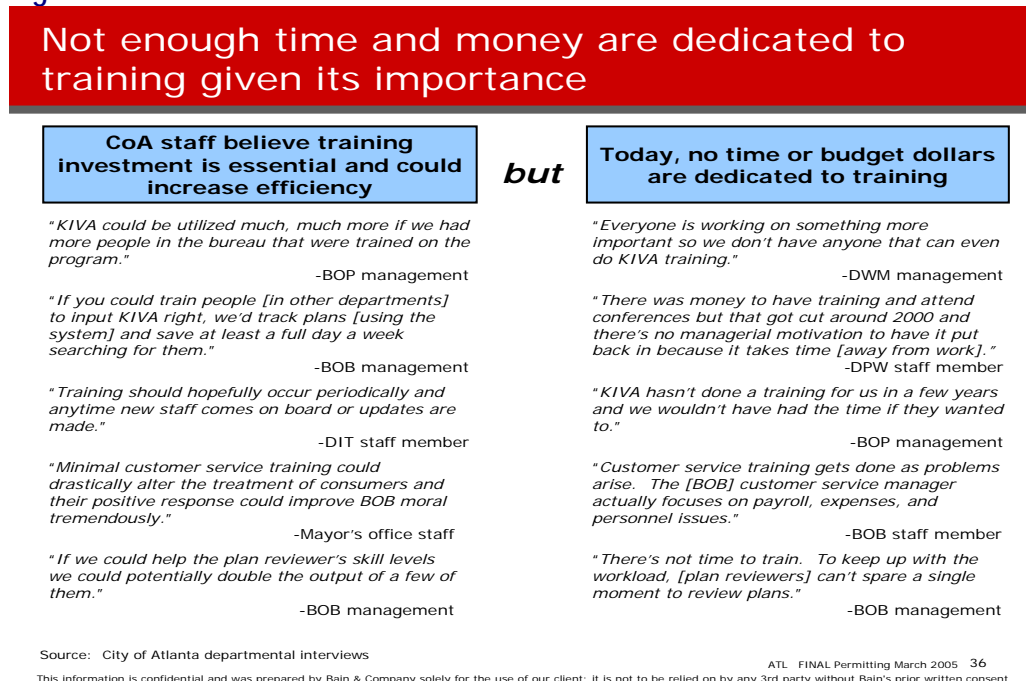
Bain recognized that there was not an organized consumer group involved in the permitting process. They also noted that consumers were dissatisfied due to the limitations in their involvement to the improvements that could be made to the permitting process. The success of the permitting project would depend on all stakeholders participating in the improvements of the permitting processes and to advocate for the success of the project (see figure 2.2.5).

Figure 2.2.5



Important to customer satisfaction was to improve upon employee satisfaction. Employees requested more training stating it would be extremely important to the implementation and execution to process improvements. Bain agreed and suggested the City develop and execute a professional skills training for staff (see figure 2.2.6).

Figure 2.2.6



Other important customer service recommendations included:

- As a part of educational materials the City should create a Permitting Primer which will allow an easy view of application requirements and details of the process. The Primer should be distributed via online and by hard copy.
- Develop a consumer policy statement "Consumer Bill of Rights" so that there will be a code of conduct and process execution policy specific to permitting.
- Conduct consumer focus groups to help assess and address consumer concerns.
- Staff reward program should be established to build moral and provide employees a means to be more involved in the program and take ownership of the outcome.
- Hiring additional greeters and customer service representatives to manage the enormous amount of foot traffic and phone calls that the departments receive on a daily basis.
- Add Intake triage role to assist in the amount of traffic that the Bureau of Buildings experiences each day.

Lastly, to ensure customer satisfaction would be benchmarked and monitored for improvements, Bain recommended that a Customer Satisfaction Survey be completed by a 3rd party at the beginning of the project and at the end of the project.

3.2

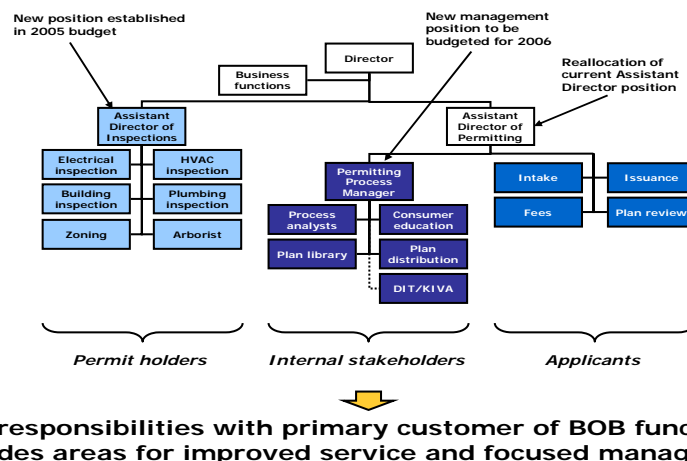
2.3 Business Process Improvements: Observations and Recommendations

The primary bureau for permitting is the Bureau of Buildings. The leadership of the Bureau had been the same for more than 30 years. Many employees had experienced only one boss for their entire 22 year average length of employment. The leadership structure did not conform well to providing excellent customer service. The Bureau had one assistant director of plan review but no one to oversee the permitting processes and customer service. In addition, the Bureau was stuck in out-dated processes and lack of standard operating procedures all within a physical layout that was inefficient.

With limited management in place and complex permitting applications rising, Bain recommended dividing the Bureau of Buildings into three parts: inspections, permitting services and plan review. This change would more align the Bureau with consumer needs and function (see figure 2.3.0).

Figure 2.3.0

Three part BOB structure is better aligned with consumer needs and functions



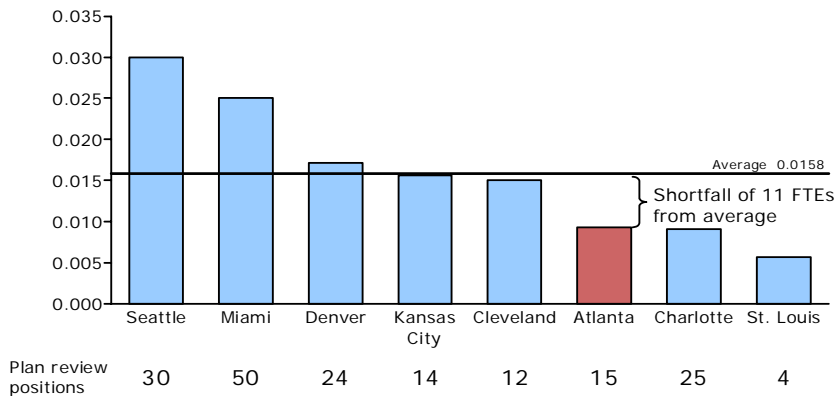
Source: Internal COA interviews, external stakeholder interviews, benchmark city research and interviews. ATL FINAL Permitting March 2005 68. This information is confidential and was prepared by Bain & Company solely for the use of our client; it is not to be relied on by any 3rd party without Bain's prior written consent.

Upon benchmarking other cities, Bain noted that Atlanta was on the low end with a shortfall of full-time employees. Bain recommended adding eleven plan review staff members and four to five other new positions including a Customer Service Manager with a Triage Customer Service Representative, and an IT staff member for the BOB (see figure 2.3.1 and 2.3.2).

Figure 2.3.1

BOB plan review appears understaffed

Full-time plan reviewer per \$M
annually permitted construction value



Note: Plan review positions based on permit department interviews regarding 2004 staffing including trade plan reviewers, engineering plan reviewers, plan reviewers conducting intake, and building plan reviewers (Atlanta consists of 8 building plan reviewers, 5 trade reviewers, and two directors performing reviews); Construction value includes total value of all projects permitted
Source: Benchmark permit department interviews

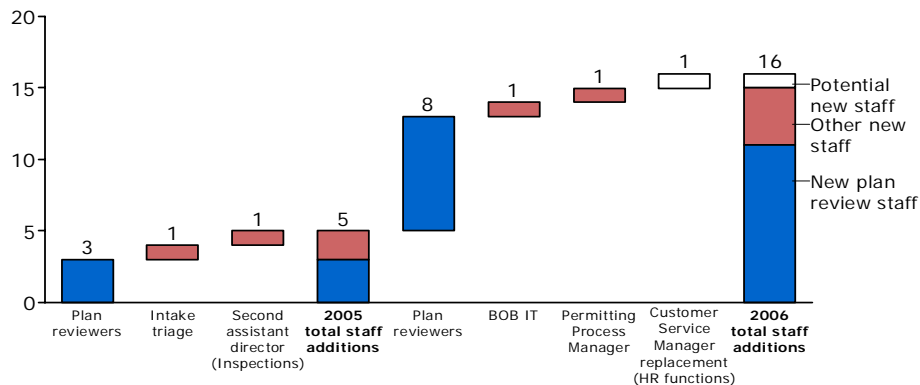
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Figure 2.3.2

Fifteen full-time BOB staff additions identified in improvement initiatives

Proposed staff additions



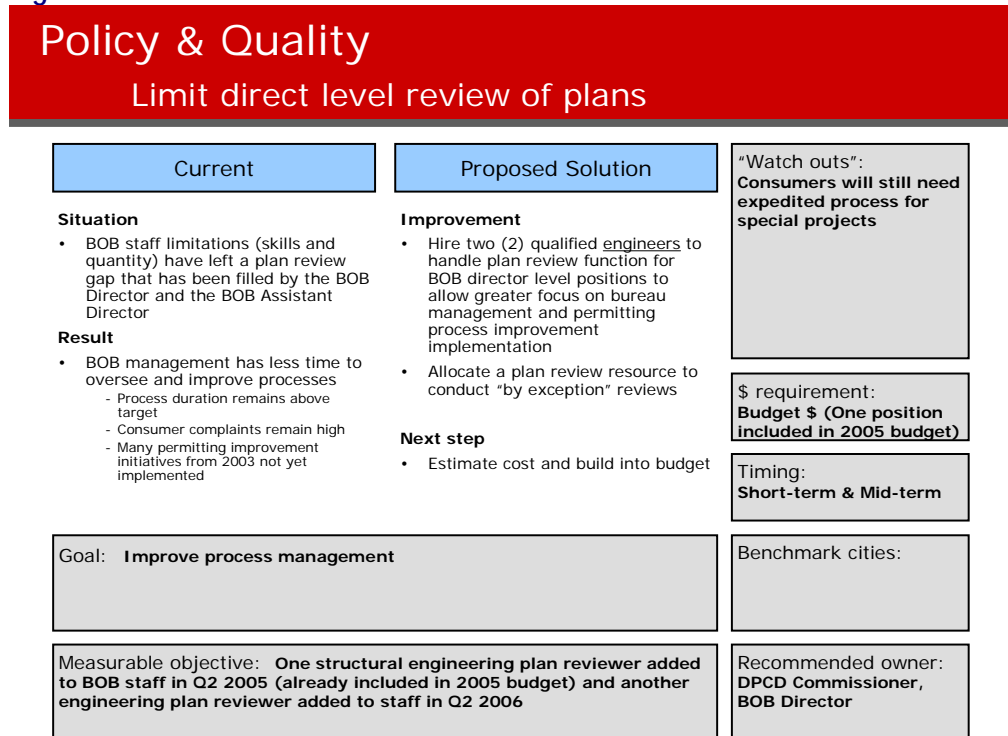
Note: Does not include reallocation of staff person for initiative implementation management or temporary process concierge duties; also does not include potential AFD plan reviewer relocation

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Relying on this data and observations of the BOB staff, Bain recommended hiring qualified engineers with the appropriate skill sets. Plan reviews were being completed by the Director and Assistant Director which reduced their ability to manage the staff and the needs of the Bureau (see figure 2.3.3).

Figure 2.3.3



Source: Internal COA interviews, external stakeholder interviews; benchmark city research and interviews
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The Bureau of Buildings has the major role in the issuing of permits and the maintenance of important property records. The bureau is responsible for maintaining the land file database which has more than 140,000 records. The Bureau issues more than 42,000 permits issued each year, with the number of complex permits rising by more than 20% per year. By the end of 2004, the cost of construction had increased by 136% with New Multi-Family leading the way by almost doubling in number of permits. New construction is much more complex due to zoning requirements and the number of agencies involved in the permitting process including agencies outside of the City's control. Bain highly recommended a dashboard measurement system to monitor and control these measurements and to determine bottlenecks and improve efficiencies.

The City of Atlanta had already begun implementing ATL Stats, a comprehensive monitoring tool used to increase departmental efficiencies. ATL Stats promotes accountability and notes bottleneck areas to improve the overall performance of the City. This effort was in concert with Mayor Franklin's returning a government to the people that is accountable and transparent. Dashboard measurements are available online to the public on the City's website.

The permitting dashboard should reflect the number of permits requested and issued by type and the time it takes to permit by agency, along with the number of reviews completed by agency. It should track clearly, reviewer comments and note any and all exchanges with the customer. The dashboard should also show number of employee hours, costs and the effectiveness by employee by permits processed. In addition, the amount by cost of construction and the effectiveness by fees earned showing the final service quality and gross permit cost as a percent of new construction cost.

Bain's overview of what the Bureau's dashboard should reflect (see 2.3.4 and 2.3.5).

Figure 2.3.4

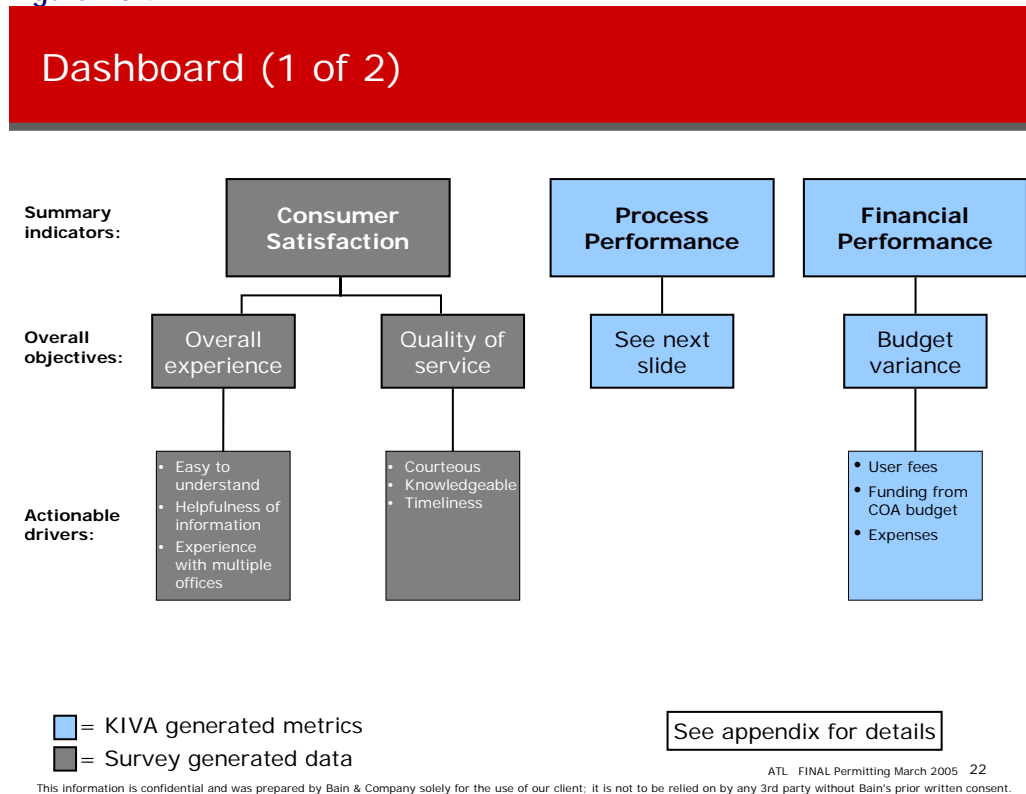
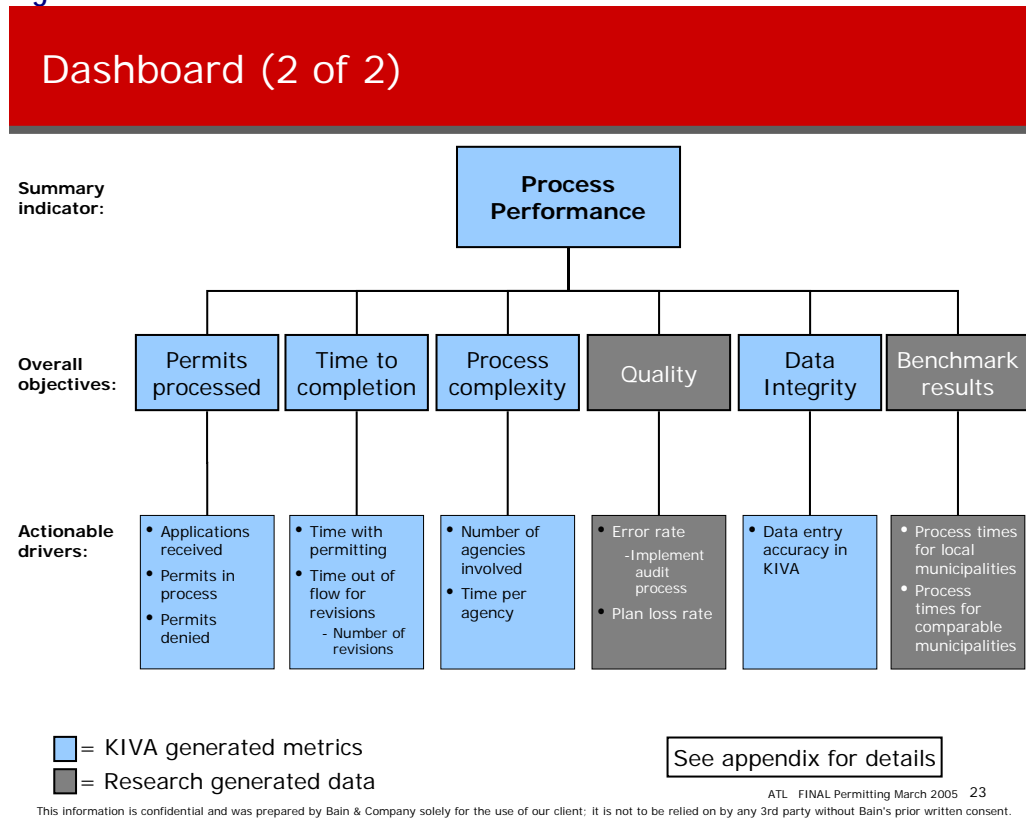
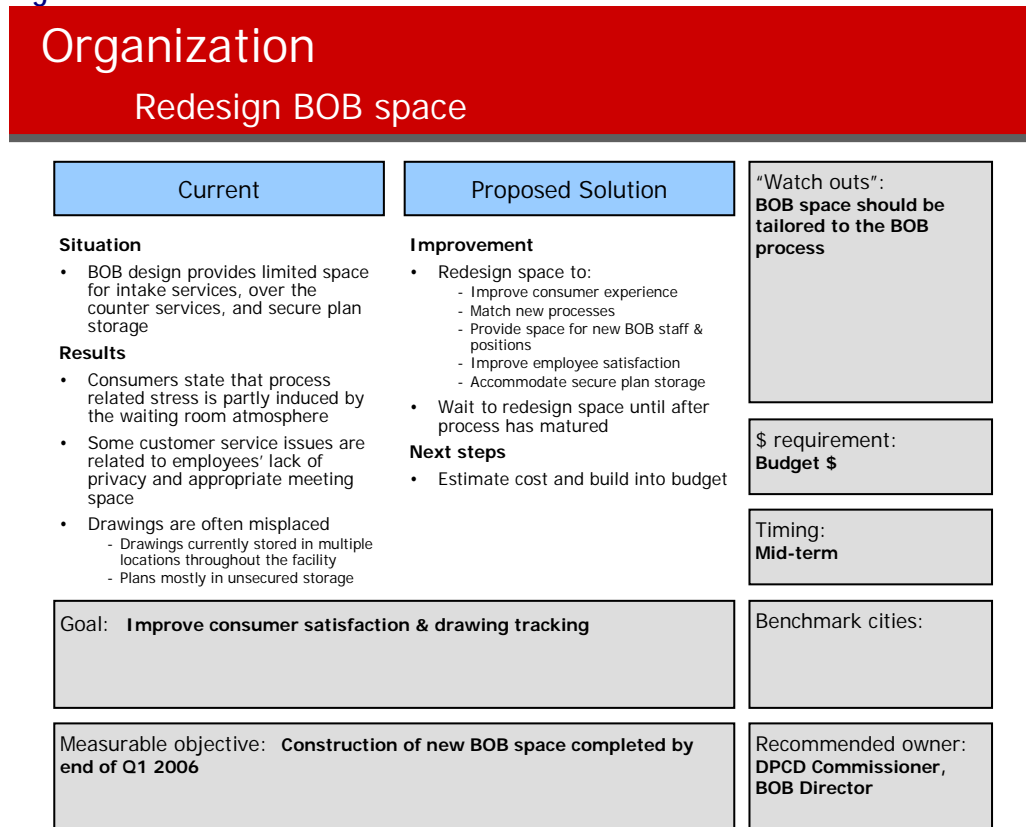


Figure 2.3.5



The Bureau of Buildings had limited space and design improvements would be needed for expedited plan review processes or 'one stop permitting' processes. Bain recommended the Bureau to review each business process and then redesign space as each process matured. While moving positions and the overall layout, new furniture, and a new look and feel should be incorporated to improve the consumer experience as well as improve employee satisfaction (see figure 2.3.6).

Figure 2.3.6



Source: Internal COA interviews, external stakeholder interviews; benchmark city research and interviews
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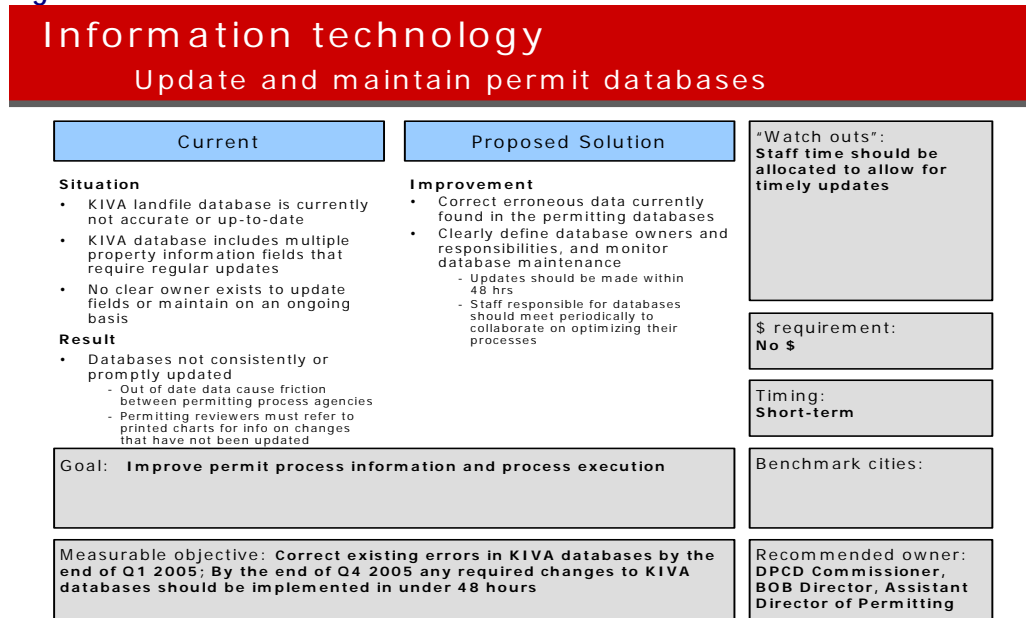
Additional business processes improvements recommended by Bain included:

- Plan intake by appointment would allow a more efficient processing of plans with a more formalized reviewing process.
- Pre-approved standard plan types will allow for master plans of model homes to be approved allowing for minimal review processes for all the applications for each model home, thus reducing the time to permit dramatically for new single and two family homes.
- Red flag for re-submittals will provide reports showing which plans are undergoing a high number of re-submittals or are taking an extended period to process.
- Reviewers intake over the counter (OTC) plans to improve the permit process duration by reducing the number of consumer visits and wait times.
- Develop SOPs for Plan Reviewers to increase the quality and consistency of all plan reviews.
- Conduct plan review audits. Random sampling of plans by management provides a great opportunity to ensure that all plans are being processed with the same standard operating procedures and that all plan reviewers are performing to a high level of satisfaction.

2.4 Technology Improvements: Observations and Recommendations

The KIVA database, or land file database, held more than 147,000 records at the time of the Bain report. Only two people were responsible for the entire database although all permit staff processors were responsible to maintain their portion in KIVA of each permit application. No one was in charge of training and each bureau was held responsible for the training of database users. This led to inaccurate updates and limited use of the database. Bain recommended the clean up of the database, clear defined owners of the information and appropriate training (see figure 2.4.0).

Figure 2.4.0



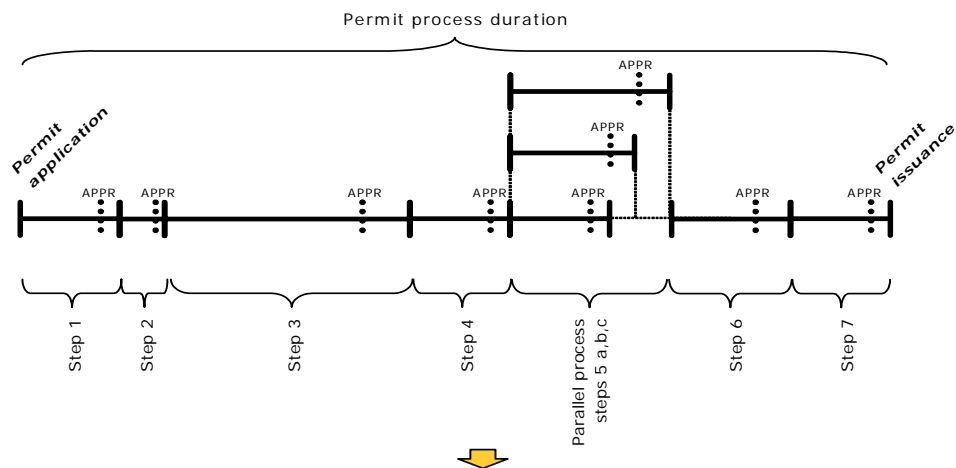
Source: Internal COA interviews, external stakeholder interviews; benchmark city research and interviews
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Proper maintenance would be required to track plans and each step of the permitting process including both customer review time and City review time. At the onset of the Bain report, the City was using Kiva version 7.0 and had not upgraded the database in several years. Many of the functionalities were outdated and would not provide the level of customer service desired nor would it provide effective dashboard and reporting methods. Bain recommended updating the KIVA system and utilizing its functionality.

With KIVA 7.27, users could enter the time a customer received the plan for changes and then the time it was returned to the City. Bain recommended, after upgrading KIVA to utilize the KIVA database to its potential, The City should set up standard operating procedures for inputting and that appropriate training of employees should be provided in order to correctly track the time to permit thus allowing the City to observe bottlenecks and correct them (see figure 2.4.1)

Figure 2.4.1.

New tracking methods will provide an improved data derived picture of entire permitting process



Dashboard's process performance report can illuminate most inconsistent, lengthy, and consumer driven process steps

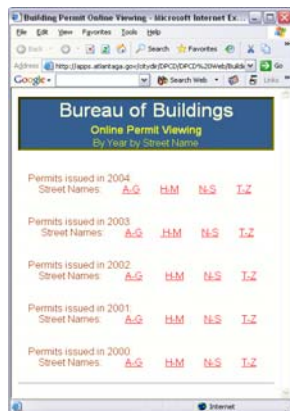
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Bain foresaw the movement to online permit processing. Although benchmark cities typically provided extensive online information, very few cities provided online permit processing and approvals along with payment. There wasn't any city providing online plan reviews. Bain observed the following through research and determined that online permitting would increase efficiencies, reduce the time to permit and reduce the number of trips to city hall required of customer in the permitting process (see figure 2.4.2).

Figure 2.4.2

Today, relatively little information is provided to consumers online

City of Atlanta online information



Source: atlantaga.gov, benchmark city websites

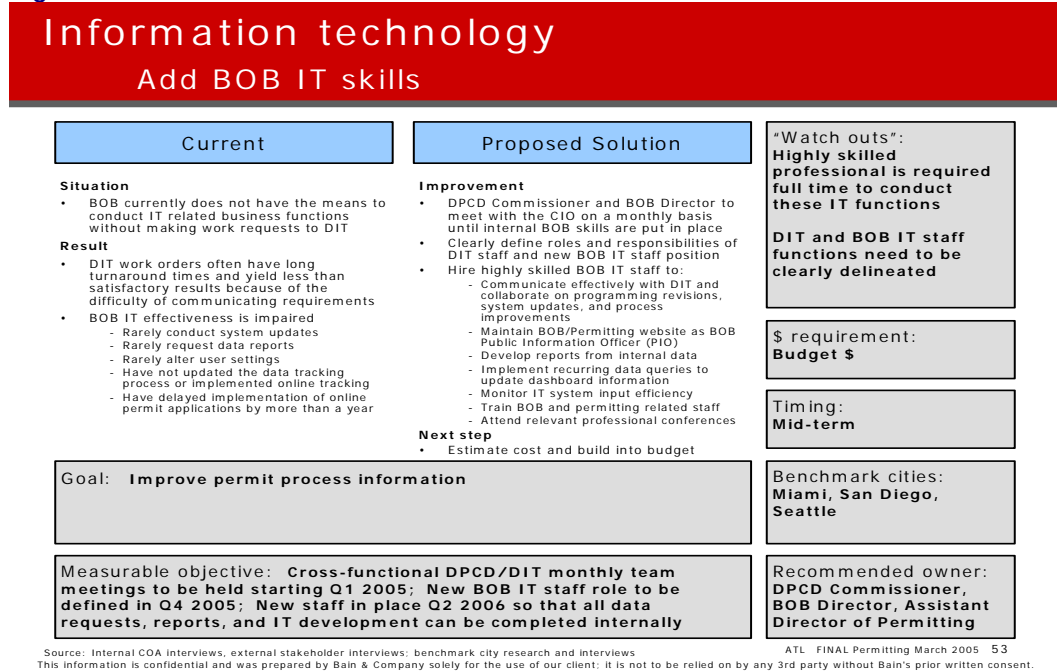
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Benchmark cities typically provide extensive online information

- Permit information
 - Descriptions & fee information
 - Application forms
 - Permit records
- Online permit services
 - Inspections
 - Application
 - Status inquiries
 - Fee payment
- Reference documents
 - Ordinances & summary
 - Brochures & reports
 - Performance statistics
 - Process & organizational description
 - Schedules: hours of operation, government meetings, training programs
- Contact information
 - Hotline numbers
 - Management contact information
 - Links to agencies outside city government
 - Directions

The Kiva database is an extremely important functionality of the Bureau of Buildings and to the permitting process. Bain recommended hiring a highly skilled BOB IT staff that would work in collaboration with DIT. Adding BOB On-Site IT Resources (Kiva Expert) to conduct IT related business functions and responsibility for the overall functions of KIVA, without relying on DIT, would be worth the investment. This person could also be responsible for the ATL Stats and dashboard information (see figure 2.4.3)

Figure 2.4.3.



Other important technology improvements recommended included:

- Provide permit status online so that any customer can have a transparent view of the current status of their permit along with comments made by the reviewer.
- Improve routing methods and hire a Courier to reduce the time to permit and increase control mechanisms for reducing lost plans
- Implement data tracking system to manage 'lost' plans.
- Online business license and sign license applications will increase efficiency and reduce the number of trips for the customer to City Hall.
- Install and use GIS layers with the ability for citizens to access information online increasing zoning accuracies and visibility for customers as they determine the property restrictions before visiting City Hall and applying for a permit.

3. Implementation Strategies

3.1 Customer Service Satisfaction

3.1.1 Overall Observations and Implementation Strategies

The vision for the Permitting Improvement Project's Customer Service Team is to provide anyone who contacts the City of Atlanta with a seamless customer service experience that is responsive, easy to use, efficient, and delivers services in a caring manner while promoting a positive image for Atlanta City government.

A critical step is to access the understanding and common vision of desired customer service in the BOB and other departments involved in the permitting process. Department management and supervision will access the leadership approach necessary to achieve the desired customer service results. Where gaps exist, training and other developmental initiatives would be taken.

After engaging many employees across the permitting process to develop a vision for customer service, the team set goals and recognition methods. The team set customer service goals around those services that customers reported as most critical. The team developed service level metrics and added the reports to the new ATL Stats dashboard. These metrics would be good predictors of how well customer expectations were being met and serve as diagnostics for addressing customer complaints.

Key customer service satisfaction areas to be measured and included:

- Clarity of the building permitting requirements.
- Time and steps required to obtain a building permit.
- Employee courtesy, professionalism and knowledge.
- Consistency in applying codes and requirements.
- Monitoring customer service concerns.

The team would be responsible for overseeing the initial customer service satisfaction survey which would be critical in developing a 3rd party baseline for customer service levels. At the end of the two year Permitting Improvement Project, the team will oversee a final customer service satisfaction survey to verify customer satisfaction and that the Permitting Improvement Project met its objectives. Since it would take six months to develop and implement an extensive initial survey the team set up a short term online satisfaction survey.

The priorities laid out by Bain for the Customer Service Team included:

- Create education materials: pamphlets, newsletter, and how-to packages.
- Formalize pre-meeting between Bldg Plan Reviewers and Developers.
- Design detailed instructions (revision notes): create forms explaining code requirements.
- Promote customer outreach: attend ABA, AIA, Trade Assoc. meetings and provide seminars.
- Establish stakeholder group.
- Develop and execute a professional skills training for staff.
- Create a permitting primer.
- Develop consumer policy statement "Consumer Bill of Rights."
- Conduct consumer focus groups.
- Design Staff reward program.
- Hire temporary process concierge: greeter to assist customers.
- Add Intake triage role.
- Monitor satisfaction by telephone and through surveys.

The Customer Service Team would also focus on employee satisfaction and assist in preparing for staff retreats as well as support the Training Team with assistance. Employees were asked to provide feedback through suggestion boxes and by participating in creating and distributing a Permitting Improvement Project newsletter. Three retreats over a two year period would be provided to employees to allow facilitated discussions on employee issues and concerns as well as opportunities to discuss, as an entire permitting team, ideas on how to improve permitting processes.

Other responsibilities of the team included:

- Reviewing efficiencies of customer service at the major customer service points such as the welcoming desk and intake office at the BOB.
- Reviewing efficiencies of the telephone system.
- Overseeing customer service training for employees.
- Providing coaching of telephone skills and all other modes of interactions with customers.
- Reviewing the efficiency of the records management system.
- Developing reports for upper management to monitor customer service concerns.

The very first item that Bain recommended, that would be implemented, was the hiring of a Customer Service Manager to assist in design and implementation of these goals and objectives.

3.1.2 Customer Service Satisfaction Survey

In the fall of 2005 as a donation to the City, Georgia Power Corporation commissioned the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) to conduct a customer satisfaction survey of those that had applied for a building permit with the City of Atlanta. The survey asked respondents about their experiences with the City of Atlanta's permitting process in general as well as asking about specific departments involved in the permitting process. This information was intended to provide the city with timely and actionable data to assist in identifying and improving the customer's experience with the permitting process. The data collected was further intended to serve as the base line from which the Bureau of Buildings could measure experience and satisfaction in the future.

Based on previous information gathered from customer feedback, the City of Atlanta provided CVIOG with areas of concern surrounding the permitting process. These general areas were then used to design a survey which would provide timely data that the City of Atlanta could then use to understand and improve the customer experience. Although the Bureau of Buildings is the primary point of entry for most permit applications in the City of Atlanta, some permits were handled by departments not under the purview of the Bureau of Buildings. The survey design took this into account and designed modules which reflected the permitting process as a whole.

In order to generalize to the population of permit applicants, CVIOG needed to select potential respondents in an unbiased and scientific way. This was done following the simple rules of probability sampling.

The Bureau of Buildings provided CVIOG with information gathered when a customer applied for a building permit. This information was gathered using the KIVA system which captured information such as contact names and numbers, type of permit requested, and a description of the project among other things. Customers who applied for a permit during the months of May through December of 2005 formed the basis for the sampling population. For each building permit application, customers were asked to provide 3 points of contact: applicant, contact person, and professional. In order to get representation from each type of contact, CVIOG first randomly chose either "Applicant", "Contact", or "Professional" from each record to be the respondent for that permit. If the "Contact" or "Professional"

information was not complete, the “Applicant” was used as the default. In cases where the “Applicant” information was not complete, the “Professional” contact information was the default. In a case where the sample file had two phone numbers for a single contact, CVIOG selected the first phone number provided as the primary contact number and the second number as a secondary contact.

Before selecting the sample records, CVIOG checked for duplicates among the selected respondents so that no individual or business appeared in the sample more than once. If an individual or business had more than one permit application, CVIOG randomly selected one permit to be included and removed the others from the sample.

Records from the sample list were assigned random numbers and were grouped according to the random value in order to eliminate selection bias. The phone center received the randomly selected potential respondents and attempted to complete interviews according to the group order assigned by the Institute of Government in the sampling process.

The phone center also received instructions with each permit as to which questions to ask of each respondent. Because some permit types would necessarily interact with specific departments in the City of Atlanta and not with others, CVIOG tailored the survey to reflect the departments most likely involved based on the permit type. This information was provided to the survey research team by the client. A specific set of questions, or module, was created for most departments involved in the permitting process. Respondents, being called in reference to a specific permit application, were given the questions most relevant to that permit type. The relationship between the potential respondent and set of relevant survey questions was pre-determined in the sampling process based on client-provide records that showed connection between permit type and departments.

The data was collected via phone survey in two separate iterations. The first contained those who applied for a permit in May, June, July, or August of 2005. This first iteration was conducted between November 8 and December 2, 2005. There were 402 completed interviews for this iteration. The second iteration included those who had applied for a permit in September, October, November, or December of 2005. There were 600 completed interviews for this iteration for a combined base line total of 1,002 completed interviews.

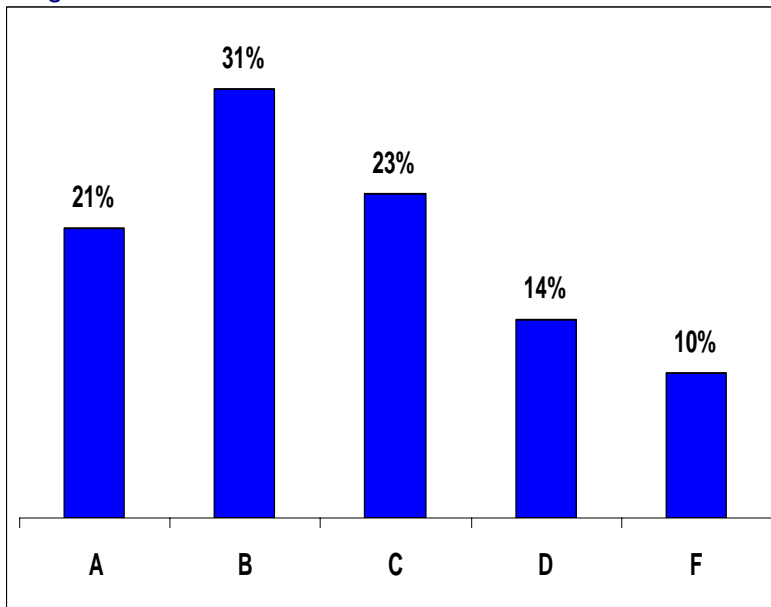
In March 2006, CVIOG completed a 123 page customer service satisfaction survey on the City’s time to permit. The survey findings included the following:

- The vast majority of respondents (77 percent) have applied for more than one permit with the City of Atlanta.
- While it appeared that most respondents were having similar experiences with the permitting process, those who had repeat experiences were slightly more likely to hold critical views than are those who have had only one experience.
- Among those who have had repeat experiences with the city, 36 percent felt that the customer service has gotten better over the past 3 years.
- In general, timeliness was an area of concern for many respondents. A plurality of respondents (38%) felt it took too long to complete the permitting process.
- The most prevalent ideas for improving the city’s permitting process were increasing overall efficiency (22%), increasing the number of staff (12%), increasing and improving communication with customers (10%), reorganizing staff and departments (9%), and making more information available online (7%).

Overall Satisfaction with Permitting Process

In order to gauge overall satisfaction, respondents were asked “What grade would you give the City of Atlanta on how they have handled your most recent permit application?” Overall, respondents give the City of Atlanta high marks (see figure 3.1.2.0).

Figure 3.1.2.0



A majority (52 percent) of respondents gave the city either an “A” or a “B” (21 percent and 31 percent, respectively).

One quarter of respondents gave the City of Atlanta permitting process a D or F.

Most of those who responded to the survey were not new to the City of Atlanta permitting process. In fact, 78 percent of respondents have applied for more than one permit with the City of Atlanta. There were some slight differences in levels of satisfaction by different customer types. Those respondents who have only had one experience with the City of Atlanta permitting process are slightly more positive than are those with repeat experiences. While CVIQ cannot be certain of the reason for this, some verbatim responses indicated that those with repeat experiences also had experiences with other county and city planning offices. It is feasible that this group of individuals grade the City of Atlanta not solely on its actions, but how it's permitting process compared to other counties or cities.

Figure 3.1.2.1

When asked “How well do you feel all the City offices worked together when it came to handling your permit application?”, slightly more than half of respondents said that city offices worked extremely well or somewhat well when it came to handling their most recent permit application (20 percent and 34 percent, respectively)(see figure 3.1.2.1).

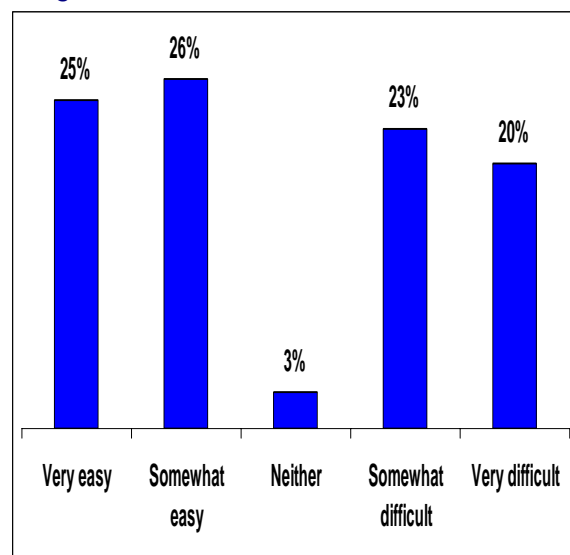
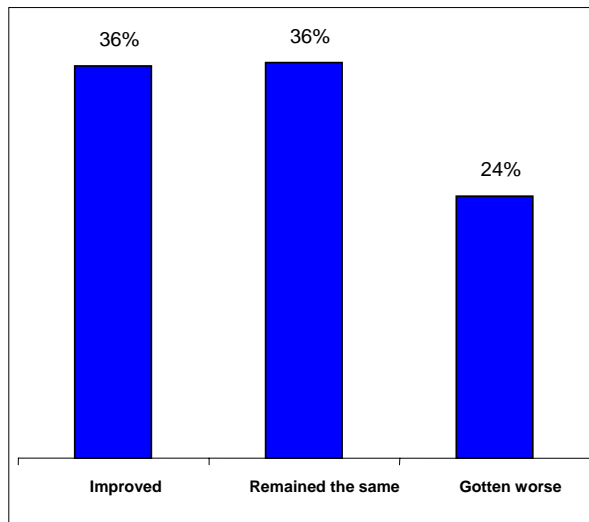


Figure 3.1.2.2



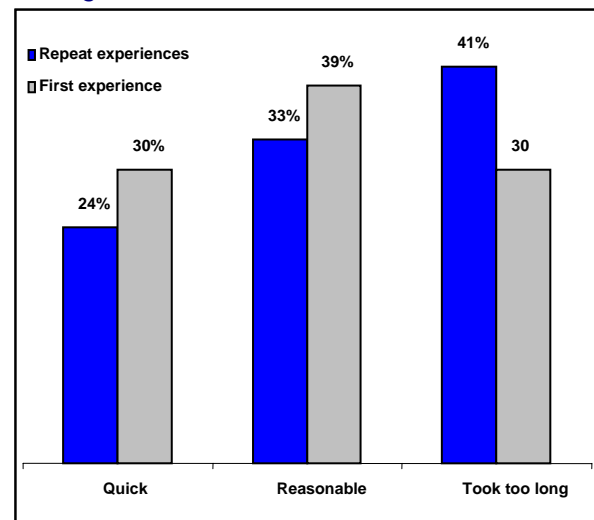
Despite occasionally lower levels of satisfaction from those with repeat experiences, the majority of those who had been through the City of Atlanta permitting process multiple times (N= 776) felt that customer service was either getting better or remaining the same. Thirty-six percent of respondents who were repeat customers say customer service had improved in the past 3 years and another thirty-six percent say it has remained the same. Twenty-four percent of respondents said customer service around the permitting process had gotten worse. The respondents who had applied with the city for permits in the past were asked “Do you feel that the customer service you have received has improved, remained the same, or gotten worse?” (see figure 3.1.2.2)

When respondents were asked about the time to process “Was the time required to complete the overall permitting process quick, reasonable, or did it take too long?” (N = 764).

Those who were repeat clients were more likely to feel that the process took too long than were those who are first time clients.

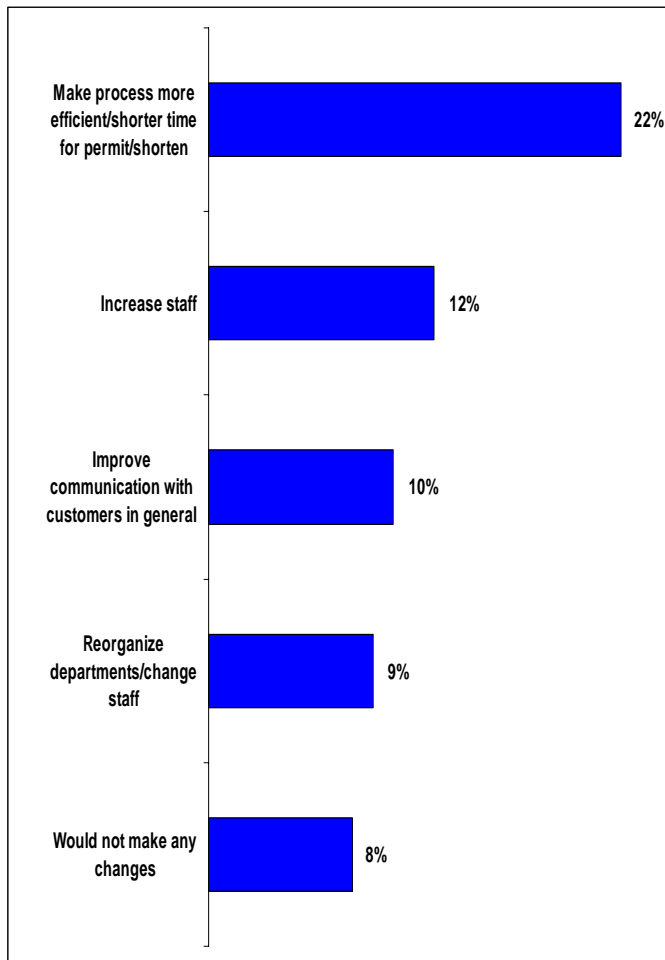
Figure 3.1.2.3

- Thirty-eight percent of those who had completed the permitting process said took too long.
- Thirty-five percent said it was reasonable.
- 26 percent said it was quick.



In order to provide the customer with the option of giving constructive feedback to the City of Atlanta, we asked respondents “If you could make one improvement to the City of Atlanta’s permitting process, what would that be?” (see figure 3.1.2.4)

Figure 3.1.2.4

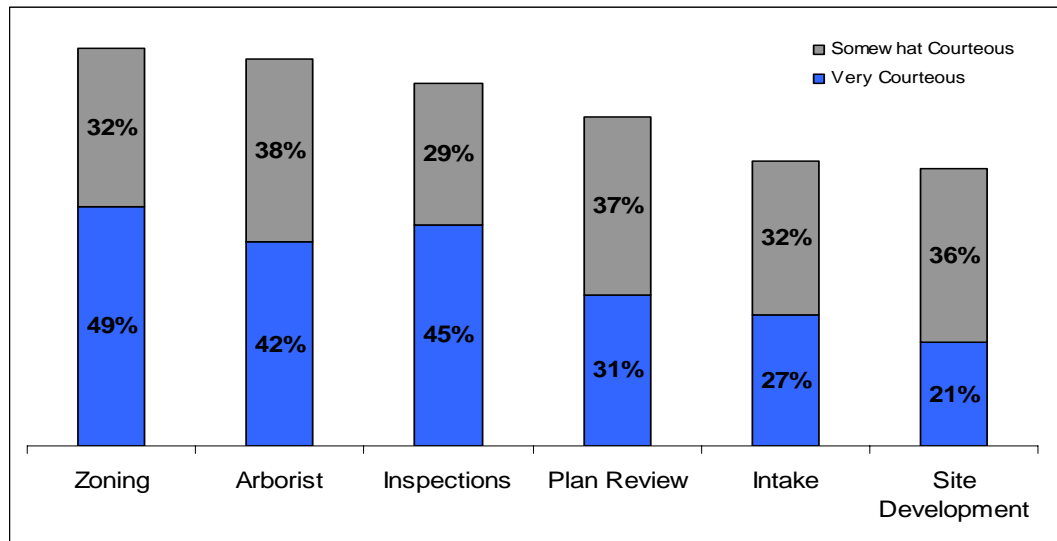


- While there was no clear majority sentiment, the most frequently occurring response was to make the permitting process more efficient (22 percent of respondents).
- The next most frequently cited responses were to increase the number of staff (12 percent),
- To increase communication with customers (10 percent).
- To reorganize departments and make staffing changes (9 percent).
- Eight percent said they would not make any changes.

Respondents were selected to answer questions about a given department based on the type of permit they applied for. Each module asked questions of particular concern to that department as well as questions on helpfulness and courtesy which were asked for virtually every department.

When respondents were asked to rate courtesy by department the results were as follows (see figure 3.1.2.5):

Figure 3.1.2.5



In conclusion, the survey data presented in CVIOG's report highlights areas where there was a need for improvement as well as areas where departments were meeting or exceeding customer expectations. Overall, respondents gave the City of Atlanta high marks on its handling of the respondent's most recent permit application. Twenty-one percent of respondents gave the permitting process an "A" and 31 percent give it a "B". There was still room for improvement however, particularly with those respondents who gave the city a "C", "D", or "F" (23 percent, 14 percent, and 10 percent, respectively).

In addition to giving high marks to the City of Atlanta permitting process as a whole, respondents generally felt that the staff in the various departments were courteous. With one exception, all departments had a majority of respondents who felt that the staff was generally courteous and relatively few (less than 20 percent) who felt they were discourteous. The exception to this was the Intake Department which had the highest percentage of respondents who said the staff was somewhat discourteous or very discourteous (15 percent and 12 percent, respectively). Considering the fact that the Intake Department was often the first contact that customers have with the City of Atlanta permitting process, this was one area where immediate change could improve customer experiences.

Within each department there were requirements which must be satisfied in order for a permit to be approved by the department. Often, these requirements can be difficult to understand, thus requiring the staff to explain the reasons behind requirements as well as assist the customer in understanding what he/she must do in order to comply with these requirements. Of the two questions asked to gauge helpfulness, only Zoning, Arborist, and Inspections had a majority of respondents who felt they did an excellent or good job at explaining both the reasons behind requirements and the steps needed to address them. Similar to courtesy, was an area where immediate change could drastically improve customer experiences with the permitting process. Immediate steps to improve the customer experience could have the long-term effect of improving customer perception around the permitting process.

Another issue of concern was timeliness and efficiency with the permitting process. Of the departments asked specifically about efficiency, Site Development, Plan Review, and Inspections, 2 out of 3 had

substantially more respondents who felt they were inefficient than efficient. The exception was the Inspection Department, in which a majority of respondents (61 percent) felt they are efficient. In addition to displeasure with individual department's level of efficiency, when respondents were asked what they would change about the City of Atlanta permitting process, the most frequently cited response was to generally improve timeliness and efficiency around the permitting process.

CVIOG recommended that as the City of Atlanta move forward with improving customer experiences during the permitting process. It was important to look not only at each department, but at the process as a whole and how that process compared with other counties and cities. Over three-quarters of customers were repeat customers to the City of Atlanta, and while there was only a weak correlation, there were some initial indications that those with repeat experiences held slightly more critical views than those who had only had one experience. While CVIOG could not say with certainty the reasons for this, respondent statements indicated that customers may have compared the City of Atlanta's permitting process with other counties and cities.

These data formed the baseline for measuring customer satisfaction with the City of Atlanta's permitting process. They were the first step in a progression that will provide more detailed information which can be used to understand customer experiences and perceptions around the City of Atlanta permitting process.

3.1.3 Customer Service Satisfaction – Permitting Project Results

In July of 2005, Brenda Shaw was promoted to Customer Service Manager after serving the City in the Bureau of Buildings for four years as an Intake Customer Service Representative and also as supervisor of records management.

The initial survey stated that the majority of customers (75%) gave the overall permitting process a rating of "C" or higher. The team wanted to target a 90% rating or higher for the project survey targeted for the fall of 2007 after the conclusion of the project with 75% rating of a "B" or an "A".

To accomplish this goal the Customer Service Team incorporated the results of the Customer Service Satisfaction Survey into their two year goals and objectives.

The first step was to assist the Business Process Team in reviewing 'low hanging fruit' permits such as Technical permits that could be easily moved to an online process as well as General Repair permits. By helping this team review the steps required they were able to provide an opportunity for more than 35,000 people to online service vs. the requirement to visit City Hall one or more trips.

The next step was to research and analyze in collaboration with the Business Process Team the needs and processes for the majority of the permitting customers with emphasis on intake of applications. The Customer Satisfaction Survey had noted that 27 percent of the customers said the intake staff was discourteous or very discourteous. The team completed a study of the welcoming process, customer routing processes and intake processes. Based on this study, the Customer Service Team concluded and implemented the following:

- Hired two additional customer service representatives to work the welcoming desk for a total of three:
- One staff member to greet customers and provide intake forms and information (Bain concierge/greeter recommendation)
- Another member to answer phones and assist in the processing of forms and answer any questions (Bain triage role recommendation).

- Another member to also answer phones, provide request for information support and to provide in-house assistance to those applying for technical or general repair permits.
- Move the over-the-counter plan review intake forms to the welcome desk and monitoring customer intake.
- Work with the Facilities Team in redesigning the welcome desk and waiting area to be customer friendly and more efficient.
- Set up a phone tree for the bureau's main line to manage approximately 6,000 calls per month.
- Review the efficiency of the records management system to reduce the number of years of on-hand plans from 5 years to one year creating additional space for day-to-day operations.
- Hired a courier to route plans to reduce and eventually eliminate 'lost' plans.

The next priority in improving customer service levels was to improve dramatically the education components for customers. Since ten percent of the survey respondents had recommended improving communication, the team collaborated with the Communication Team to develop brochures and other materials that would educate and inform customers of new policies and procedures as well as make existing procedures easily understandable. The team then:

- Reviewed all customer forms including permit application forms, checklists, etc.
- Moved all forms and documentation to online viewing with interactive abilities.
- Created an online permitting primer.
- Created an easy step-by-step chart of the permitting application process.
- Created a 'consumer bill of rights'.
- Developed and presented eight developer workshops.
- Worked with management in developing relationships with trade organizations.
- Worked with management in support of the Stakeholders Group.
- Worked with management in supporting the consumer focus groups.

The Customer Service Team concurrently focused on employee satisfaction and assisted in preparing for staff retreats, developing and executing professional skills training for staff, and supported the Training Team with technical skills training, primarily KIVA. Additionally, customer service training was made mandatory to all employees including telephone coaching skills. To successfully implement employee satisfaction programs the team also:

- Provided employee satisfaction surveys.
- Provided suggestion boxes for employee feedback.
- Assisted the Communications Team in designing and releasing of a Permitting Improvement Project newsletter.
- Oversaw three employee retreats over a two year period to allow facilitated discussions on employee issues and concerns as well as opportunities to discuss as an entire permitting team ideas on how to improve permitting processes.

As all of these goals were implemented, the Customer Service Team developed reports for upper management to monitor customer service concerns and integrated these reporting measures in with the quarterly ATL Stats.

Lastly, the Customer Service Team oversaw the successful six month process of an initial customer service satisfaction survey. This survey was critical in developing a 3rd party baseline for customer service levels.

At the end of the two year Permitting Improvement Project, the team would oversee a final customer service satisfaction survey to verify customer satisfaction and that the Permitting Improvement Project met its objectives.

3.2 Business Process Improvements

3.2.1 Overall Observations and Implementation Strategies

The first task at hand during the first year of the project was to dedicate a significant amount of time to personnel changes and management practices required to implement the business process transformation called for by the Bain report. With limited management in place and complex permitting applications rising, Bain had recommended dividing the Bureau of Buildings into three parts: inspections, permitting services and plan review. This change would more align the Bureau with consumer needs and function. Additionally, a search for a new Commissioner for the Department of Planning and Community Development would need to commence as well as a search for Director for the Bureau of Buildings, Bureau of Planning, Bureau of Code Compliance as well as the manager of the Arborist Division located within the Bureau of Buildings. Other departments involved in the permitting would need to review and access their management and personnel needs accordingly.

The first task at hand for the new management was to work with the Business Process Team to continue to review all existing business processes and design more efficient business processes with the major goal of reducing the time to permit. The goal of reducing City time to process permits by 50% had to be met by the end of June 2007.

The next priority for management was to begin to work with all the teams and all the management within the Bureau to develop ATL Stat Reports. An ATL Stat / dashboard measurement system would need to be established to monitor employee performance and develop ownership of the information which had never been done. By monitoring employee performance, management could determine bottlenecks to the time to permit.

KIVA training was required as the date had been noted by Bain as incorrect or missing. IT skills in the BOB would need to be enhanced or new staffing with the IT skills.

Other critical requirements for the Business Process Team would be to:

- Work with the Land File Team and review the clean up process and make recommendations for new processes and procedures.
- Work with the team implementing upgrades to the KIVA database.
- Work with the Legal team negotiating the Homebuilders Association lawsuit which would result in business process requirements and later the HB 1385 requirements.
- Research, analyze and make recommendations for Field Operations Automation.
- Work with the Online Permitting Team in reviewing current business processes and create more efficient permit applications that could be processed online.
- Work with the Facilities Team to lay out new business processes and determine how to physically create a streamlined operation.
- Work with the Communications Team to provide, in simple terms, all new business processes to be communicated to the public and to employees.
- Work with the Training Team to educate employees on the new KIVA upgrades and new business processes.

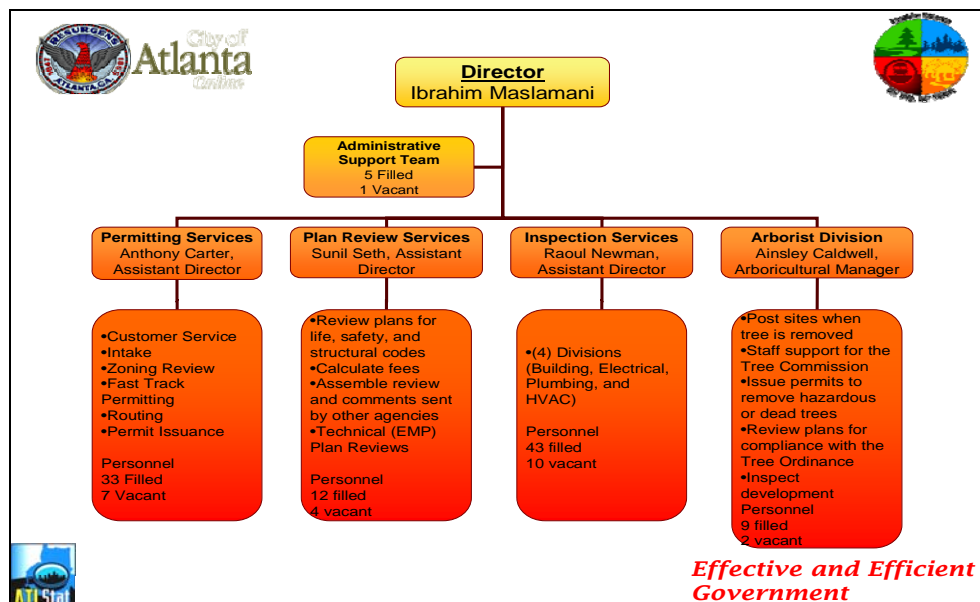
6.5.1. 3.2.2 Business Processes Improvements – Permitting Project Outcomes

The first task at hand for the Executive Office was to recruit talented experienced leadership for the Department of Planning and Community Development. In January of 2006, after an exhaustive search, Steven R. Cover assumed the position as Commissioner of the Department of Planning and

Community Development for the City of Atlanta. Prior to joining Mayor Shirley Franklin's senior staff, Mr. Cover was the Director of the Department of Environment and Community Development for Fulton County where he served in that position since 2001. He has direct responsibility for the management and oversight of five major areas including the Bureaus of Planning, Buildings, Housing, Code Enforcement, and the Atlanta Urban Design Commission. Some of his top priorities as Commissioner include: improving the permitting process, restructuring the Department's processes to make them more efficient, managing certain aspects of the Beltline Development Project, creating new, affordable, workforce housing, and overseeing the City's first Transportation Plan and the City's Atlanta Strategic Action Plan, a 20+ year strategic plan.

Commissioner Cover immediately went to work at bringing supporting leadership to take the helm the various bureaus within his department. Ibrahim Maslamani was hired as the Director of the Bureau of Buildings (BOB), Alice Wakefield as the Director of Planning, and Tim Hardy as the Director of Code Compliance. Mr. Maslamani began to implement the Bain recommendation of a new 3 part structure (see figure 3.2.2.0) and hired a New Assistant Director of Permit Issuance, Anthony Carter and a new Assistant Director of Inspections, Raoul Newman. Sunil Seth, with more than 30 years of engineering experience and who had been the Assistant Director of Permitting, stayed on as Assistant Director of, Plan Review. (see figure 3.2.2.0). Additionally in the Bureau of Buildings, a Manager for the Arborist Division, Ainsley Caldwell was recruited. In the Bureau of Planning, a GIS Office was created in July 2006 and GIS Manager, Steve Williams was recruited.

Bureau of Buildings Organization Chart (Figure 3.2.2.0)



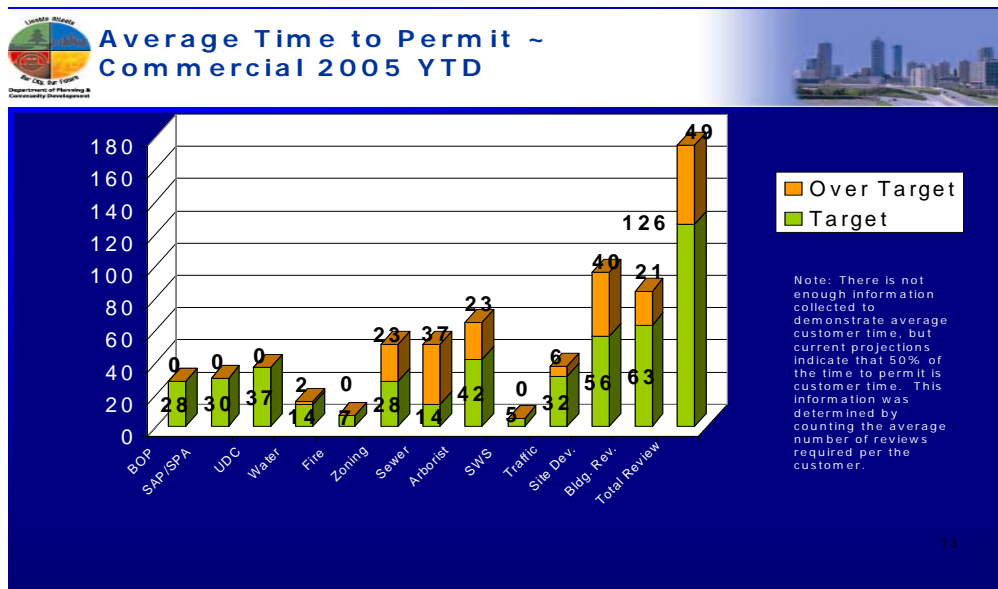
With the new team in place, Commissioner Cover along with other key internal stakeholders including Joseph Basista, Deputy Commissioner of Department of Watershed Management and over Site Development, began focusing on the primary objective of the two year project, reduce the time to permit.

Bain noted that the first charge to reduce the time to permit would be to add additional plan review staff. Atlanta was on the low end with 15 vs. Seattle with 30 positions and Denver with 24.

The BOB director immediately began recruiting plan reviewers and to date, has hired a total of 29: Trade – 4, Building – 10, Intake – 5, Special Projects – 3, and Zoning – 7. Where skill sets were not being met with job skill set requirements, staff was replaced with highly qualified reviewers. In addition,

outsourcing of plan reviews began. Additional Arborist plan reviewers were added and, Site Development doubled their number of plan reviewers. These were the key areas that were taking the longest time to process permits (see figure 3.2.2.1; note some reviews were concurrent). Other positions added included customer service and intake staff.

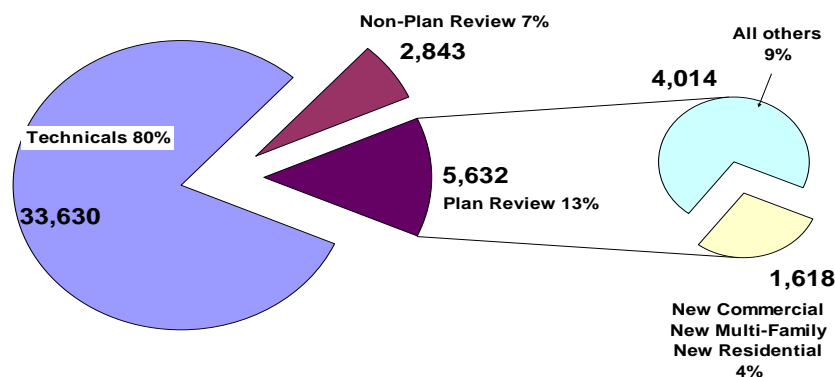
Figure 3.2.2.1



Critical to designing and implementing new business processes, the Business Process Team began to review:

- The types of permits.
- Number of permits issued by type.
- Type of action needed.
- Number of steps required.
- Number of applications per plan reviewer by month, week and day.
- Number of signoffs and exchanges between the City and the customer.
- Average days to signoff.
- Average days of outstanding pending applications.

In 2005, an analysis was of how many permits by complexity was completed for FY 2004 (figure 3.2.2.2) Figure 3.2.2.2

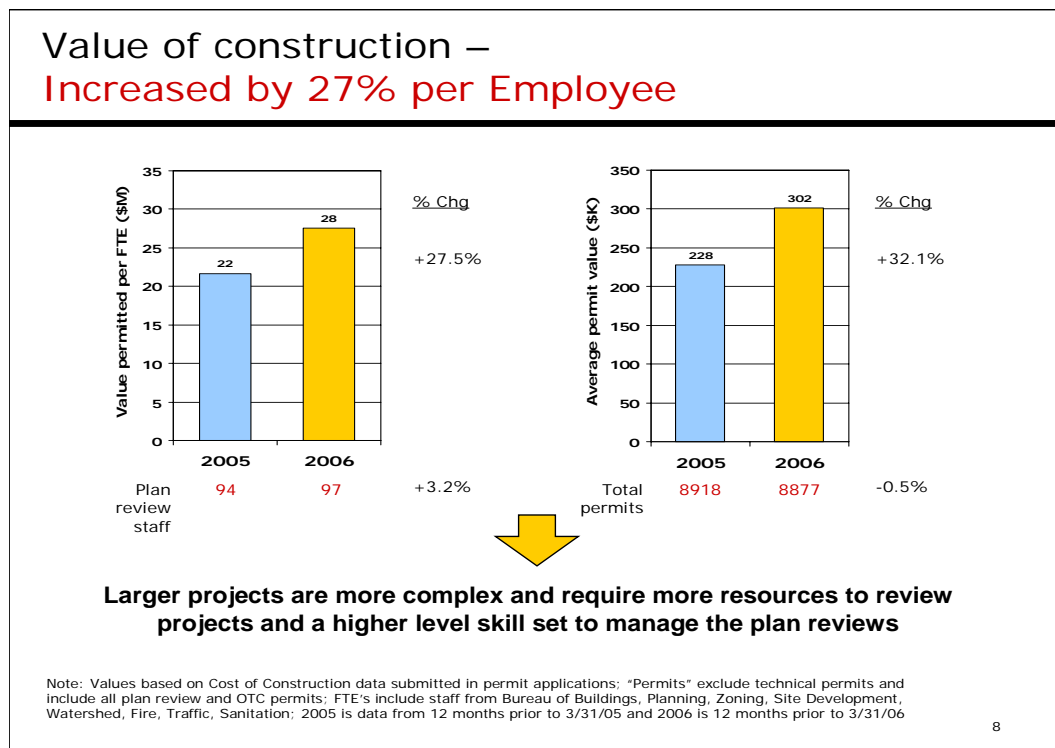


The low hanging fruit for immediate improvement included permits that did not require plan review. The Business Process Team immediately went to work with the Online Processing Team to make all Technical Permits (HVAC, Electrical, Plumbing and Elevators) available to process online. These permits consistently average approximately 80% of the annual permits. The next permits targeted for online processing were General Repair permits which annually averaged approximately 7%. Within the first 3 months of the project the ability to process and pay for online Technical and General Repair permits was completed. These permits could now be issued within 15 minutes vs. one to five days.

Permits that were bringing about the greatest challenge to the project were new construction permits and in particular, New Residential, New Commercial and New Multi-Family. Although these represent only 4% of the City's permits, it represented the greatest challenge and what was the major issue giving rise to the need to implement the Permitting Improvement Project.

Over the last five years New Commercial permits in Atlanta have increased by 174%; New Residential permits have increased by 160%; and New Multi-Family has increased by 94%. This boom has had a dramatic impact on the City's ability to process building permits in a timely, efficient and cost effective manner (see figure 3.2.2.3) showing the impact of cost of construction by employee. Larger projects, such as New Commercial and New Multi-Family, tend to be much more complex and therefore, can require more time consuming reviews significantly impacting the City's ability to process buildings permits quickly to promote economic development.

Figure 3.2.2.3



The critical complaint for new construction projects by developers, architects and engineers was the lack of clarity around the requirements and the action required before plans could be submitted to the City. Additionally, professionals found it difficult to know who to speak to when issues arise.

In July 2005, a Major Projects Team was constituted and a coordinator was hired to provide opportunities for the City's permitting team and the developer's team to meet and review major projects (\$10 million or more, or new multi-family consisting of 100 units+, or 0+ or more of new single or two family homes).

The mission of the Major Projects Team is to ensure that the City of Atlanta processes efficiently the issuance of building permits for major permitting projects while delivering a high level of customer service. To provide a best-in-class service the Major Projects Team:

- Provides a team approach to the permitting process to enhance communication and cooperation between departments, bureaus and divisions. Team members include experts in Site Development, Urban Design, Planning, Buildings, Traffic and Engineering, Zoning Enforcement, Fire, Sanitation, Arborist and application processing.
- Presents a transparent view of all issues and coordinates and communicates all activities as needed to immediately respond and resolve all permitting concerns.
- Reports up-to-date information for internal and external customers.

The team approach allows the developer to note critical issues pre-development including requirements for:

- Tie-back agreements
- Historical
- SAP approval
- Zoning enforcement
- State of Georgia
- Variance
- Arborist
- Erosion Control

Since the team began in July of 2005, more than 149 projects have been processed by the team of which the majority is the most complex building projects, New multi-family. The team has processed 96 multi-family projects, 7 sub-division, 9 public projects and 38 commercial projects. The cost of construction for all applications submitted to the Major Projects Team totals more than \$1.4 billion.

This team has been a major asset to the City and to the success of the Permitting Improvement Project.



The development community was extremely pleased with the outcomes of the Major Projects Team.

- Seboard :
“ I recently became involved with the City of Atlanta’s permit process. Needless to say, I had heard many of the horror stories about how chaotic, disorganized, and time consuming getting a permit would be. People told me it would take me at least a year to get a permit for a major project. I had been advised that I would have to endure many rude and unreasonable people.
I am pleased to inform you that my experience was exactly opposite from what I had been told it would be. Gloria Pennick, Brenda Shaw and Esther Oluyemi of your staff were polite and enthusiastic about assisting me and guiding me through the permit process. It appeared to me that they put forth an extra effort to keep me informed on the status of my project. I found them to be very responsive and committed to providing the best customer service possible...”
- 3630 Peachtree:
“...You guys have been doing an incredible job!...thank you for your hard work.”
- RBC Centura Bank building:
Thank you for following up on my letter. I want to thank all of you who were personally involved in helping me obtain our permit. I was able to obtain the permit for the RBC Centura Bank building at 293 Pharr Road on Friday. It was a pleasure to actually see your team work in cooperation with each other and me to see this permit through to fruition.
I would personally thank Lou Rouselle, Brenda Shaw and Bosun Awoyemi who were courteous, displayed attention to detail, a sense of caring and professionalism. Their help on Friday was both welcomed and appreciated.

The Business Process Team then reviewed in detail the number of steps required for each permit type. One obvious improvement that could be made would be to consolidate payments for permits. Some permits could require returning to the City seven times during the permitting process. Effective February 6, 2005, the Bureau of Buildings enhanced the payment process for all contractors, developers and the general public seeking a building permit.

Payment for the following services will be due at the end of the process after the permit had been approved:

- Site Development Plan Review
- Site Development Inspections
- NPDES
- Pipe and structural Inspections
- Subdivision Review – Site Development
- Sewer Capacity Certification
- Fire Tent
- Fire Tank
- Arborist-Recompense
- Impact Fees
- Building Permit
- CO’s were added to this feature later in the year.

As the Business Process Team began their in-depth analysis of time to permit by department, it became apparent that the internal policy of Zoning sign-off before moving forward to the departments was adding up to an additional 21 days in the permitting process. In July 2006, the City began processing applications concurrently with Zoning by all departments.

In reviewing by permit/type, the team realized that many new residential projects involved model homes. Model home projects are projects involved multiple homes that use one or more models for all other homes in the project. Why should a plan reviewer review the same design and layout twice? Additionally, if the site had already been reviewed and approved, why would additional site reviews be necessary? A Fast Track Permitting Team was constituted in July 2006 to process these types of permits. The team is comprised of an intake coordinator and two plan review specialist allowing for the review process to be completed by the team from start to finish. Master plans of model homes are reviewed and approved requiring no additional review of the remaining plans unless changes are made before the development of the plan. This allows developers to process multiple plans at a time reducing their time to permit by a tremendous amount of time.

Another early quick win to reduce the time to permit for new residential single and two family home projects was the decision to allow architects to sign a notarized form stating that that all building codes and City guidelines had been followed. By signing this form, the building plan reviewer would enter the project into KIVA, process the application and sign off on the building plan review without reviewing the plans. On August 1, 2005, the Residential Automatic Approval Certification Policy was then implemented which reduced the processing time considerably.

By the fall of 2005, many easily implemental action items that would have an impact on the time to permit had been made. The next steps would be to make an in-depth dive by developing a reporting system. With 42,000 permits issued each year, the number of complex permits rising by more than 20% per year and a land file database with 147,000 records, Bain had highly recommended a dashboard measurement system. The City of Atlanta had already begun implementing ATL Stats, a comprehensive monitoring tool used to increase departmental efficiencies. ATL Stats promotes accountability and notes bottleneck areas to improve the overall performance of the City.

The permitting ATL Stats / dashboard would provide critical information for deep analysis to improving the time to permit. The reports generated at minimum:

- The number of permits requested by type.
- Processing time by agency.
- Number of reviews by agency.
- Reviewer comments and all exchanges with the customer.
- Employee hours, costs and the effectiveness by employee by permits processed.
- Cost of construction and employee effectiveness by fees earned providing a final service quality and gross permit cost as a percent of new construction cost.

On October 3, 2005, the Bureau of Buildings presented its first ATL Stat presentation. This was after months of creating and implementing more than 45 reports that would be used across many departments and agencies involved in the permitting processes. Dashboard measurements are followed daily and the ATL Stats presentations occur quarterly before the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer and other key executive staff members.

Another successful outcome resulting from the Permitting Improvement Project is the final approval of revisions made to the City's Tree Ordinance. The origin of Atlanta's tree protection can be traced back to some 40 years ago, but the first stand-alone Tree Protection Ordinance was adopted in 1993. Over the ensuing years, there have been a number of amendments, the most recent of which was in 2007. Unlike most tree protection ordinances in Georgia, the City of Atlanta ordinance applies to new development as well as existing homeowners' requests for tree removals for any purpose including room additions, hazardous trees, or general landscaping needs.

The ordinance it created a hurdle that could prolong the building permit issuance process and adversely impact development. After several months of public hearings and community meetings, on June 4, 2007, City Council approved major revisions to the Tree Ordinance. The new revisions are:

- Limit appeals to residents and owners within the Neighborhood Planning Unit where the property is located.
- Revised the notice to the public (posting); this will be done at the time of permit application, (and for a minimum of period of 10 days) with a second notice (posting) at the time arborist staff preliminarily approves the plans. This second posting is for a period of 5 additional days, during this time an appeal may be filed. This new process reduces the time to obtain a permit by a minimum of 10 days, but still preserves the 15 days public notification (posting). Requires a written summary of appeal argument and documentary evidence prior to an appeal hearing.
- The Tree Conservation Commission must conclude or resolve each case within two months of the initial hearing.

Other business processes were streamlined include:

- Effective August 22, 2005, the Bureau of Building requires a notarized letter for Cost of Construction when submitting an application for a building permit that requires a plan review. The letter must state the projected cost of construction; it must be signed by the owner, architect, engineer or contractor, and stamped by a notary public.
- Effective August 8, 2005, the Bureau of Buildings Small Plan Review Sign-in Sheet, both Commercial and Residential, was moved to the Welcome Desk. The Customer Service Manager now oversees this process to insure a faster delivery of quality reviews by our Plan Review Specialists.
- Effective August 22, 2005, the Bureau of Buildings requires specific designation and square footage of every living unit for Multi-Family Developments.
- Effective November 3, 2005, the Bureau of Buildings have separate intake sign-in sheets:
 - Major Projects and Multiple Plans (more than one set submitted)
 - Single application submittals.
- Red Line: Effective August 8, 2005, Plan Reviewers are now required to complete a standard form listing the reasons an application is put on hold. This is in addition to red lining the plans.
- Plan intake by appointment: Effective August 8, 2005, Plan reviewers began a more formalized reviewing process by setting up intake applications by appointment.
- Effective December 2005 Plan Reviewers intake over the counter (OTC) plans.
- Effective December 2005 Plan review audits to randomly sample plans for quality control.
- August 2006, the BOB re-opened to the public on Tuesdays. Previously on Tuesdays the BOB had been closed to accommodate the staff to catch up on backlogs. This issue had been resolved by the hiring of additional staff and the outsourcing of plans.
- Effective January 2007 four combination inspector positions were created. These inspectors are trained to do all inspections types thus reducing the need to request separate inspections for mechanical, electrical and plumbing inspections.
- Effective January 2007 all customer service staff will be cross-trained to issue all permit types and process inspections operating as One-Stop technical and inspection processing.
- Checklists: checklists were revised with each new process and made available online. These checklists helped the customer identify all items and action required before submitting an application.
- Application Forms: all forms are now easier to process and to track important information.
- Review Sheets for Plan Reviewers: to standardize the information submitted when plans are redlined.
- Red flag for re-submittals will provide reports showing which plans are undergoing a high number of re-submittals or are taking an extended period to process.

Lastly, the Business Process Team worked with the Customer Service Team and Facility Improvements Team to review the Bureau of Buildings limited space and design improvements needed to improve the plan review processes and create a 'one stop permitting' processes.

3.3 Technology Improvements

3.3.1 Overall Observations and Implementation Strategies

For technical advances to be successful, several critical factors would need to be addressed. Department of Information Technology would be a major stakeholder and would need to agree to the Permitting Improvement Project as a major initiative that would require many staff resources and financial support through product purchases.

The Chief Information Officer, Abe Kani, wholeheartedly agreed to the significance of the project and provided support by assigning a deputy commissioner, a project manager and several IT analyst, programmers and support staff to the project. With DIT's support, various technology teams were constituted including a Land File Cleanup Team, On-Line Permitting Team, Kiva Upgrade Team and Field Operations Automation Team.

The Land File Team had the daunting task of reviewing 147,000 records and determining a methodology that would allow for a streamlined process of what records were inaccurate or missing and then how to best correct the data.

The team decided to target three categories:

- 1) Zoning – identified as most critical high priority
- 2) "GEO" fields
 - Council Districts
 - NPU's
 - Census Tracts
 - Census Block Groups
 - Fire & EMS Impact Fee Area
 - Police Impact Fee Area
 - Parks Impact Fee Area
 - Transportation Impact Fee Area
- 3) Other Flags
 - Historic Districts
 - Historic Properties
 - Moratorium Areas
 - Special Interest Areas (Beltline, etc.)

The critical technology path to time to permit was the KIVA database and its use. Proper maintenance would be required to track plans and each step of the permitting process including both customer review time and City review time.

At the onset of the Bain report, the City was using Kiva version 7.0 and had not upgraded the database in several years. Many of the functionalities were outdated and would not provide the level of customer service desired nor would it provide effective dashboard and reporting methods. Bain recommended updating the KIVA system and utilizing its functionality. To determine if the City should maintain and upgrade the KIVA database, a product by Accela and what steps would be required after that analysis, the KIVA Upgrade Team was established.

This team included key members of DIT, the Bureau of Buildings, and other key stakeholders.

The Online Permitting Team had the major task of creating new systems and processes with very few models. Many cities had permitting application processes in place but not online processing of permits and online payments. The team would need to work with the City's banking institution and with Accela. The team would need to include the finance department and have collaboration with Finance on setting up agreed upon new policies and procedures.

The team would need to review all permit types and determine if and when the permits should be moved to online applications. In addition, all forms and applications would need to be moved to online interactive availability. These would require working with several departments and 7- 10 agencies involved in the permitting processes.

Lastly, the team would need to be a part of the Training Team to help educate employees on how to use the new KIVA upgrades. This would require many hours of training and the development of training manuals and tools.

The Online Permitting Team would also need to assist the Training Team in developing training packages and assist in the training of all new online business processes. Bain recommended hiring a highly skilled BOB IT staff member to work in collaboration with DIT. Bain made this recommendation because the BOB is the owner of the KIVA database system which is critical to the Bureau's operations. The BOB management would need to work with DIT and Human Resources to determine the job description, job skills and next steps in the hiring process.

All technology based improvements would need to be reviewed, researched and analyzed by all the technology based teams over the two year project period. This effort would require coordination, collaboration and seamless execution planning. The staff members accepted this challenge and successfully implemented many new technological advances for improved City efficiencies.

3.3.2 Technology Improvements – Permitting Project Outcomes

Technology advances are still being made and additional working plans can be viewed in the 'our vision' section of this report.

The Land File Team had the daunting task of reviewing 147,000 records and correcting errors with zoning and other GEO fields.

The team began by laying out a methodology that would allow for a streamlined process to determine what records were inaccurate or missing and then how to best correct the data. They compared the GIS system file records to the KIVA file records. The team targeted three categories including zoning information, GEO fields such as council districts and other flags such as historic districts.

Out of the 147,000 records 30,000 records were identified requiring action to correct errors. Working diligently, by July 2006, the project was successfully completed. The success of the cleanup allowed for the Online Permitting Team to move forward in providing Zoning Verification online for customers.

By having all errors corrected and now matching the GIS, the GIS system could be the master list allowing for all fields to be assessable for online viewing. The newly formed GIS Office in July 2006 immediately began creating an online zoning layer and all other GEO fields for customer viewing. Target date for completion is set for August 2007.

As Bain noted, a critical technology path to time to permit was the KIVA database and its use. Proper maintenance would be required to track plans and each step of the permitting process including both customer review time and City review time.

At the onset of the Bain report, the City was using Kiva version 7.0 and had not upgraded the database in several years. After researching other products that could be a permitting database for the City, the Kiva Upgrade Team decided to move forward with Accela products and developed an implementation strategy, training and education tools along with a timeline to install 7.26 and then 7.27.

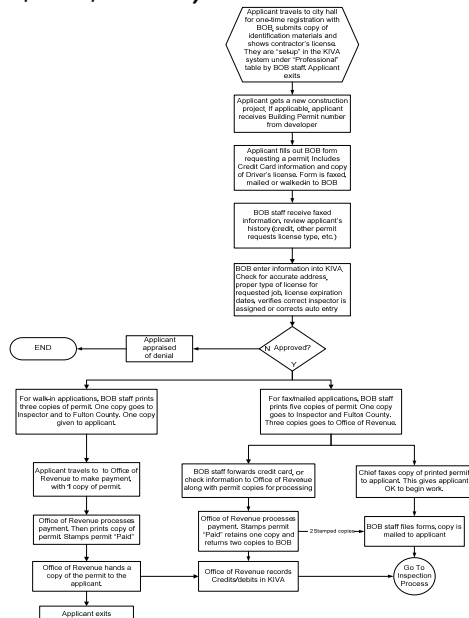
With KIVA 7.27, users could enter the time a customer received the plan for revisions and then the time it was returned to the City. To utilize the KIVA database to its potential, the BOB management along with the Training Team set up standard operating procedures for KIVA maintenance and began with the appropriate training required to accurately track the time to permit. This allowed management to observe bottlenecks and quickly execute corrective action.

Upon completion of the upgrade to 7.27, the BOB decided to continue with KIVA upgrades and the City is currently using 8.02 and will advance to 8.12 by early 2008. BOB management would like to move to Accela Automation vs. KIVA, however the cost of this move is prohibitive at this time.

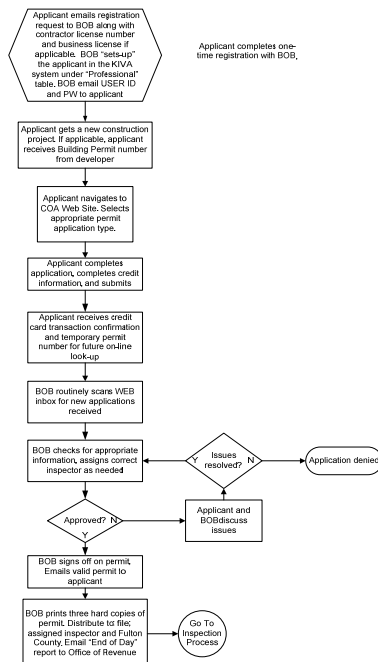
The Online Permitting Team had the major tasks of creating new systems and processes with very few models. The team immediately began a review all 78 permit types and determined if and when the permits should be moved to online applications. Additionally, the team worked with each permitting agency and determined which forms and applications could be moved to an online interactive form. Working with the Business Process team all Technical permits (HVAC, Electrical, Plumbing and Elevators) and General Repair permits were made available online by June 2005. These permits in total consistently average approximately 87% of the annual permits. These permit types can currently be issued within 15 minutes vs. one to five days. Below in figure 3.3.2.0 is an example of the previous business process for Technical permits vs. the new online process. This one change saves the City more than \$170,000 per year mainly due to the reduction in employee time.

Figure 3.3.2.0 Technical Permits – Previous vs. Improved Process

Previous Process (fax, mail, walk-in)



New Online Process



The following dynamic online forms and applications now available online include:

- Zoning Verification
- Request for Information
- Tree Removal Application
- Request for Posting and Final Inspections

The following PDF forms now available online include:

- Applications
- Checklists
- Inspection Requests

With the ownership of the KIVA database and the issuance of permits residing in the BOB, Bain recommended hiring a highly skilled BOB IT staff member to work in collaboration with DIT. The BOB director made the decision to advance an existing position within the department and increase the job description to include the oversight of ATL Stats and dashboard information. This decision was made because upon review several existing staff members were extremely knowledgeable in KIVA. By advancing their KIVA training and skill sets, a faster process of implementing new reporting methods and procedures was much more efficient and less costly.

This BOB management, along with the technology based teams continues today to review research and analyze all opportunities to advance new technologies for improved City efficiencies.

Other important technology improvements implemented during the project include:

- Effective February 6, 2006, Online Permit status provide customers a transparent view of the current status of their permit along with comments made by the reviewer.
- May 2005 Courier hired with new procedures to manage delivery of plans to each division to reduce the time to permit and increase control mechanisms for reducing lost plans.
- July 2005 Data tracking system to manage 'lost' plans.

The vision of the BOB is to be best-in-class in permit issuance and project teams continue to develop strategies for future technological advances to reduce the time to permit. These working plans can be viewed in the 'our vision' section of this report.

4. Our Vision

The City of Atlanta has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years, more particularly since the hosting of the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. There is an anticipated boom in population growth in Atlanta of 300,000 people or, by 62%, by 2030.

The City of Atlanta's successful completion of the Permitting Improvement Project has provided a new and efficient permitting process that will contribute to a strong foundation for continued economic development in Atlanta. Development practices as well as City goals and objectives continue to change and improvements to the permitting processes are critical to advancing economic development and Mayor Franklin's vision that *"Atlanta will be the thriving core of the metropolitan area - The most successful city in the southeast - A competitive city, nationally and internationally"*.

The Department of Planning and Community Development is also focused on Mayor Franklin's vision of several major projects that will transform the urban core of the City by managing future growth and creating sustainable communities.

Atlanta's BeltLine: Atlanta's New Public Realm: www.atlantada.com/adalntiatives/beltline.jsp

Ideally located approximately 1 to 3 miles from downtown, the BeltLine will convert 22 miles of underutilized or abandoned railroad corridors and more than 2,900 acres of underutilized residential, commercial, and industrial land into a continuous system of transit and greenways. Parks and pedestrian-friendly mixed use development nodes along the BeltLine will offer a vibrant street life and quality of life improvements interconnecting the BeltLine's 45 adjacent neighborhoods. Essential to the concept is that the three key elements – transit, greenspace and development – are interrelated and that the proposed transit network connects seamlessly with MARTA (the public transit system) and other transit opportunities, as well as adjacent neighborhoods.

The Peachtree Corridor: <http://www.peachtreecorridor.com>

The Peachtree Corridor is two miles longer than Manhattan Island. Spanning 14.5 miles, the corridor stretches through the heart of Atlanta. More than a quarter million people travel to the corridor every day. The Peachtree Corridor represents both the center of Atlanta's existing economic strength and one of the greatest opportunities for further economic development and commercial activity. Effectively coordinating, planning and developing the city's efforts will encourage balanced growth in the corridor, and together with other city initiatives, will support increased connectivity in the City of Atlanta.

To execute Mayor Franklin's dynamic vision, the Department of Planning and Community Development is developing the Atlanta Strategic Action Plan (ASAP), formerly known as the Comprehensive Development Plan. The ASAP will build upon previous planning efforts and initiatives addressing many issues targeting a 20+ year time frame to 2030. The plan will include population projections, economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, community services and facilities, intergovernmental coordination, transportation and land use and many other important strategies and policies to plan for Atlanta's future in a responsible and coordinated way.

To execute Mayor Franklin's dynamic vision and to effectively manage the anticipated demand on the Bureau of Buildings and the City's permitting operations, The Department of Planning and Community Development is in the process of implementing strategies in preparation for future demand of more permit applications, along with

our continued desire to improve our level of customer service, increase our efficiencies, and reduce the time to permit. The following initiatives will support this vision:

4.1 Atlanta Strategic Action Plan (ASAP)

<http://www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/burofplanning.aspx>

To execute Mayor Franklin's vision, the Department of Planning and Community Development is developing the Atlanta Strategic Action Plan (ASAP), formerly known as the Comprehensive Development Plan. The ASAP will build upon previous planning efforts and initiatives addressing many issues targeting a 20+ year time frame to 2030. The plan will include population projections, economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, community services and facilities, intergovernmental coordination, transportation and land use and many other important strategies and policies to plan for Atlanta's future in a responsible and coordinated way.

4.2 One-Stop Shop Permitting Facility

With the Bureau of Buildings, Bureau of Planning and the rest of the Department outgrowing its space in City Hall, the Department requested assistance from the Urban Land Institute to determine where would be the best location to accommodate its needs.

After a complete evaluation of the Department's needs and viable office space within reasonable proximity to City Hall, it was determined that constructing a new building across the street from City Hall on Trinity Avenue was the best option.

This would allow the Bureau of Buildings and the rest of the Department to custom design its office and work space in such a way as to maximize efficiency and be accessible and user friendly to its customers. It has the potential to become a true state-of-the-art, one stop shop facility in every way and that is the City's full intention.

The Department and the City are currently working on a plan and funding for this proposal and are preliminarily looking at a 2010 completion date.

4.3 Revising and Simplifying the Zoning Ordinance

The zoning ordinance is an important tool in the reality of this vision. It is tool that can be used to sustain ***healthy neighborhoods and quality of life***—*"Atlanta will have safe, healthy neighborhoods with excellent public schools, parks and thriving commercial corridors."* It is a tool that can be used as a catalyst for ***economic opportunity***—*"Atlanta will support and develop industries that create jobs for its workforce and the City will consistently be rated as one of the best overall in which to do business."* It is also a tool that can facilitate the installation of ***physical infrastructure***—*"Atlanta's transportation, water, and waste infrastructure will support the city's growth and provide quality service to its residents."* The zoning ordinance can serve as a contributing partner to improving the issues identified as priorities in the City's New Century Economic Development Plan. Specifically, the task of updating the ordinance is in support of the following economic development initiatives:

- Support growth of target industries
- Create and grow business recruitment, retention and expansion capabilities
- Champion Beltline, Downtown and Brand Atlanta Campaign as major development projects
- Increase economic vitality of underserved areas
- Make it easier to develop in Atlanta
- Increase workforce housing
- Make Atlanta one of America's safest cities
- Grow dedicated parks and greenspace

The ordinance has been amended through text amendments sponsored by City Council members and staff in response to development practices that required immediate attention, changes in State law, constituent requests and adoption of new policies and elements in the Comprehensive Development Plan. As a result of the incremental amendments, the ordinance in its current state is difficult to understand and does not comprehensively and adequately communicate the land use policies or its regulatory objectives.

The City's zoning ordinance needs to be revised to reflect and incorporate the new planning concepts that are befitting a city that is fast approaching full development. It has become apparent to City officials that the existing zoning regulations are outdated and, in many cases, inadequate to shape future growth in a manner that leads to sustainable, pedestrian friendly built environments. For example, the low-density development pattern and the segregation of land use in large areas of the City have led to auto dependency and the associated problems of air pollution and traffic congestion. Moreover, developers, citizens and even City staff have found that the zoning ordinance is difficult to use, complex, and cumbersome. In an effort to address the changes in development practices, ensure the compatibility of regulations with established City goals and objectives, formulate realistic and workable regulations and promote user friendliness of development standards, the City will undertake a comprehensive review and update of the zoning regulations. It is anticipated that the project will involve both a reorganization of the regulations, addition of new sections, and the rewriting of many sections to incorporate new concepts and regulatory techniques.

Issues identified to date that will need to be addressed through the update of the zoning ordinance will generally fall into the following categories:

- Substantive
- Procedural
- Format

In an effort to jump-start the process of updating the zoning regulations, Mayor Shirley Franklin organized a Zoning Review Task Force in 2006 to outline a proposed plan of action and develop areas for review. The Task Force includes the Deputy Chief Operating Officer, senior staff of the Department of Planning and Community Development-the Commissioner, Director of the Bureau of Planning and Assistant Director/Zoning Administrator of the Bureau of Planning-, citizen advocates, developers, and representatives from the Mayor's Permit Improvement Stakeholders Group, attorneys with expertise in zoning issues and Senior City of Atlanta attorneys. Numerous areas were identified for legislative review and with assistance from staff; these areas were categorized as short-term and long-term initiatives.

SHORT-TERM INITIATIVES -ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE - SEPTEMBER 2007

Initiative #1: Development of legislation to address the issue of out-of scale infill housing. The City of Atlanta is now faced with addressing the issue of out-of scale infill housing. These terms are used to describe the process where existing single-family detached homes are demolished or enlarged to create homes that are significantly larger than the existing traditional homes in a neighborhood. The development of these houses is driven by a market for modern amenities, such as larger kitchens, cathedral ceilings, huge walk-in closets and additional bedrooms. These amenities are not found in many of the older traditional homes found in established neighborhoods.

June 2007 Status: Legislation has been drafted and introduced to address residential scale issues, including, floor area ratio, height limits, site coverage. The legislation has been reviewed by the Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU's) and will be heard by the Zoning Review Board on June 28, 2007. This legislation is anticipated to be adopted by August 2007.

Initiative #2: Adoption of a Digital Zoning Map. Up until 2005, the City's zoning map has been created and maintained manually. The citywide hard copy format was consistently maintained by primarily one staff person. Updates to the map were made after adoption of zoning amendments and distributed to the Zoning Enforcement Division in the Bureau of Buildings and within the Bureau of Planning. In instances when there is a need to resolve a conflict of the zoning indicated on a map, the process requires manual research of a variety of sources including previous resolutions, ordinances, final maps, and development permits. In 2005, as a part of its efforts to overhaul the building permit process, the City designated the modernization and confirmation of land records as a priority. This task is extremely important to the building permit process as the City moves to an increased utilization of technology in the permit process. The land database system, KIVA, provided the platform for the initial translation of manually maintained land data into a digital format. The transition efforts included a detailed comparison of Fulton County's GIS maps to the city's official Mylar maps and the data contained in the KIVA system. The results of this comparative analysis provided a starting point for the staff to research and validate the current zoning. This analysis was very labor-intensive and time consuming, but in the end, assisted in the production of an effective tool for land development reviews for the benefit of the City and the public.

June 2007 Status: The transition from the Mylar maps to a digitized format has been completed. Legislation to adopt the digital format has been introduced. The Zoning Review Board recommended approval of the digital format of the Zoning Map on June 14, 2007. The Zoning Committee of the City Council will act on the legislation at its June 27, 2007 meeting and the full Council is expected to vote on the legislation at the June 4, 2007 meeting. Overall, the Neighborhood Planning Units have offered a decision in support of this transition...

The Official Zoning Map will serve as an important resource tool thereby improving the level of service and overall efficiency of the Department. A digital format of the Official Zoning Map will improve predictability and consistency in application of regulations in the Land Development Code by providing one source for accurate zoning information. The Official Zoning Map is expected to improve the development review process by removing additional staff time previously attributed to researching multiple sources including some that contained conflicting information. The staff has begun to use the digitized format in reports and increased utilization will occur by the staff after the legislation is officially adopted. The general public can expect to have increased access to the digitized format beginning in August 2007.

Initiative #3: Development of legislation to increase the availability of workforce housing. Inclusionary zoning is a program that requires developers to include affordable homes when they build a particular number of market-rate homes. This type of zoning is viewed as a tool for the provision of affordable housing and ensuring that the housing is built throughout a jurisdiction. Increasing affordable housing is a goal identified in the City's New Century Economic Development plan. One of the action items for this goal is the implementation of an effective Inclusionary Zoning Program.

June 2007 Status: The Zoning Review Board will conduct a public hearing on the inclusionary zoning legislation at a public hearing on June 28, 2007. This legislation includes incentives to allow developers to exceed the zoning density provided a percentage of the additional units are affordable it has been circulated to the NPUs for review and action. Staff has received the comments from the NPUs and will be reviewing the comments this month in order to develop a substitute ordinance in response to the comments. Legislation to adopt inclusionary zoning is anticipated to be adopted by August of 2007.

Initiative #4: Evaluation of the current Downtown zoning and the implementation of recommendations of the Central Atlanta Progress Imagine Downtown Plan. Central Atlanta Progress partnered with the City of Atlanta on an initiative to review and update the current zoning regulations that govern the physical growth and development of the Downtown area. Central Atlanta Progress in partnership with the City of Atlanta has conducted the Imagine Downtown planning process for the area surrounded by Northside Drive, North Avenue, Boulevard and I-20. The Atlanta City Council adopted the Imagine Downtown plan into the City's 2004-2019 Comprehensive Development Plan by reference on April 17, 2006 and the Mayor approved it on April 25, 2006.

June 2007 Status: The legislation is currently under review by the affected NPUs. Each NPU, upon completion of their review, will provide their comments to staff. The legislation will have a public hearing before the Zoning Review Board in July or August 2007. Adoption of the legislation is anticipated in August 2007. Recommendations for development standards were developed through a series of meetings with stakeholders and these recommendations have been incorporated in the proposed zoning regulations. The intent of the regulations is to create a vibrant downtown environment where people can live, work, meet and play; and to promote a mix of uses that support pedestrian activity and provide development standards for the street environment to enhance the public realm and encourage pedestrian activity throughout Downtown.

Initiative #5: Beltline Development. As a way to champion the Beltline, a package of zoning standards needed to be developed to include detailed development guidelines consistent with the Beltline redevelopment plan.

June 2007 Status: The Beltline Overlay District legislation has been adopted and the Bureau of Planning is administering the regulations. The adoption date was February 2007. The regulations strengthen the city's regulatory framework to ensure the implementation of the Beltline vision.

Initiative #6: Develop legislation to implement the recommendations of the Memorial Drive/Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridor Study.

June 2007 Status: The regulations have been adopted and are being administered by the Bureau of Planning. The regulations included the rezoning of various areas in this corridor and established a framework for the redevelopment of core commercial nodes.

Initiative #7: Develop legislation to amend the Quality of Life Zoning Districts to implement priority area plans.

June 2007 Status: Amendments to the various districts are now being drafted by the Bureau of Planning. The Bureau will begin presentation of the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance Task Force at its June 26, 2007 meeting. The Bureau will conduct informational briefings with the neighborhood planning units prior to formally having the legislation introduced. It is anticipated that the regulations will be by September 2007.

LONG-TERM INITIATIVES

The long-term initiatives will be undertaken over a three-year time period, anticipating completion by 2009. Since the last comprehensive update, many new zoning concepts, such as floating zones, performance zoning, form-based codes and the concept of "New Urbanism" have emerged and are now shaping development practices. Undeveloped land is quickly disappearing and becoming unavailable. The City's zoning ordinance needs to be revised to reflect and incorporate the new planning concepts that are befitting a city that is fast approaching full development. It has become

apparent to City officials that the existing zoning regulations are outdated and, in many cases, inadequate to shape future growth in a manner that leads to sustainable, pedestrian friendly built environments. For example, the low-density development pattern and the segregation of land use in large areas of the City have led to auto dependency and the associated problems of air pollution and traffic congestion. Moreover, developers, citizens and even City staff have found that the zoning ordinance is difficult to use, complex, and cumbersome. In an effort to address the changes in development practices, ensure the compatibility of regulations with established City goals and objectives, formulate realistic and workable regulations and promote user friendliness of development standards, the City will undertake a comprehensive review and update of the zoning regulations. It is anticipated that the project will involve both a reorganization of the regulations, addition of new sections, and the rewriting of many sections to incorporate new concepts and regulatory techniques.

Long term initiatives that can be categorized as substantive encompass the clarification and modification of the zoning language and the updating of the zoning standards. The language defines the standards applicable to each district and the procedures that govern the administration and amendment of the code. A substantive issue with updating the language is to ensure that it is readily understood by applicants and the general public. Ambiguous and lengthy narrative should be avoided. Language should be clear and concise. For example, the names of districts should be as descriptive as possible.

The standards comprise the majority of the zoning ordinance. Updates to the standards are far behind the growth of development occurring in the City. Some standards are out of date and will require a major overhaul, some are non-existent and must be developed, and some that have been updated and defended in a court of law will require minimal, if any housekeeping. In the end, the updates should focus on ensuring compatibility with surrounding land uses and the community.

Procedural tasks identified to be completed by close of year 2009, include the following:

- Establish a formal procedure for interpretation of the ordinance.
- Clearly define development review procedures.
- Institute detailed project management provisions for the preparation, filing, processing and evaluation of applications by staff.
- Simplification of permitting procedures, *i.e. site plan approvals after BZA action and adoption of legislation for rezoning and special use petitions*
- Formatting tasks identified include the following:
 - Reorganize the ordinance into an “*easier to use*” format that will address logic: Where will users most expect to find specific information?
 - Revise the format to include the use of navigation tools.

4.4 ProjectDox – Electronic Digital Plan Submittal

The City of Atlanta, Bureau of Buildings is faced with the challenge of moving the permitting process to a paperless environment while looking for ways to expedite the plan submittal, resubmission, review and approval process all in its continued effort to reduce the time to permit.

To increase the effectiveness and use of information technology in the permitting process and support online permit processing plans submittal, tracking, and field inspection, Bureau of Buildings has chosen ProjectDox, a web-based solution that will both integrate with Accela software products and is user friendly for citizens and review staff.

The initial Pilot phase (July 15-Sept. 15, 2007) of the project included, purchase of software and hardware for hosting the system. Large and dual screen monitors were purchased for the Plan Review Staff involved in the initial phase of implementation. The Bureau is working with developers who are involved with tenant improvement permits as a test

Key Features	Benefits
Easy To Use	ProjectDox is a simple useable tool for citizens and reviews collaborate, review plans regardless of the skill level.
Central Review Data Repository	Project Dox becomes a centralized repository for all project plan review data (drawings, resubmissions, and approvals. Allows for easy location and retrieval of information contained within the drawings.
Side by Side Comparison	Provide ability to check differences between pages and versions easily. Differences are highlighted by color so they are immediately obvious.
Control Access To	Control who is invited to the project and what they can do with the project data, including markup, upload/download, versioned or marked up.
Notifications	Ability to e-mail project notifications to all participants of uploaded, downloaded, change requirements and resubmission of drawings.
Customizable	ProjectDox's forms, workflows, etc. are easily customizable.

Funding was secured in the 2008 Budget for maintenance and purchase of additional hardware to expand the project. Time to permit is anticipated to drop through the full implementation of this efficient means of plan submittal and review. A cost savings to the customer will also be realized by reducing the cost for the need of courier services. Complete rollout of the project is anticipated to be implemented by December 1, 2007.

In addition to the direct benefits above, the City will also see other benefits such as the ability to implement some teleworking environment, and therefore increase the pool of plans review applicants as well as retaining existing staff. Other benefits include reduction of office space needed for staff and visitors.

4.5 GIS – Online Zoning Map and Interactive Layers

Online Zoning Maps

The city's GIS-based zoning map is scheduled to become the official source of current zoning information in July 2007. Zoning information via the GIS will be available in a number of different ways.

- **Official Tile Maps**

The official zoning map will actually be presented as approximately 140 individual maps based on the land lot grid. Each map will be available online in PDF format. The individual tile maps will be searchable through an index map. The maps will be labeled with the zoning classification for

each zoning district and color-coded for easy interpretation. These maps will also be available for purchase in paper form in the Bureau of Planning. The official tile maps will be available to the public by mid-July.

- **Interactive Zoning Maps**

Current zoning information will also be available within an interactive online mapping application. City staff as well as the public will be able to create their own customized zoning map by navigating to a specific area of interest and by turning on and off various map features such as streets, property lines, parks, streams, ponds, flood plains, neighborhood and NPU boundaries, city council districts, and topography. In this way, very detailed information can be displayed for a particular area or site. The location of pending re-zoning cases can also be displayed on the map. The interactive maps will be available internally to city staff by mid-July and to the public by the end of September.

- **Property Search**

An additional online tool will allow users to search for information on a particular property. A search can be initiated based on an address, parcel ID, or owner name. For each property record returned from the search, the current zoning will be displayed along with an array of other information. The property search tool is currently available internally to city staff and will be available to the public by the end of September.

4.6 Field Operations Automation

Handheld devices for field inspectors will improve efficiencies of inspections and inspection reporting and provide for immediate information including CO's for customers. The Field Operations Automation Team began work in May 2005. Their responsibilities were to automate the field inspection processes with the most cost effective and efficient program available. The target users of this system would be field inspectors. If an inspector, such as an electrical inspector, can have a laptop with appropriate software that connects to the KIVA database, then field reports can be issued immediately to the customer.

Other benefits to Field Operations Automation include:

- The system would allow contractors to request inspections online.
- The system would assign inspection request per inspection based on their assigned territories. The inspectors could then download their inspections from a remote location, which would eliminate the need for the inspectors coming into the office. Thus freeing up much needed office space for other uses and create additional time for more inspections.
- The inspector would be able to view permits in the field, which eliminates the need to actually print a copy of the permit.
- The inspector enters inspection results which automatically updates the computer in real time. This eliminates the need for clerical staff manually updating the system.

Over an 18 month period several systems were researched and cost benefit analysis completed. A pilot test was completed testing a variety of various field apparatuses including phones and laptop computers. A final analysis was completed and >>>>

To improve services to the citizens by providing real time inspection results, handheld devices will enhance reporting capabilities of inspectors in the field. The purchase of Tablets to be use with Accela Wireless, a mobile government application, extends processing capabilities to the field inspectors and code inspector personnel.

Portable Handheld devices ensure that even when inspectors are out in the field, they are never out of touch with the office. Inspections can be assigned, rescheduled, or canceled at the last-minute and an alert can be sent automatically to the inspectors via the mobile device. Inspection results can be uploaded within a matter of minutes reducing the time of customers receiving inspection results.

Also, when inspectors are responding to code violations, enforcement staff will have the ability to view current parcel data or code violation history by remotely accessing their land management database. New cases can be created and inspections performed on the spot for unscheduled violations encountered in the field.

Funding was secured in the 2008 Budget to purchase software and hardware for building, technical and code enforcement inspectors.

Implementation is scheduled for the 2nd quarter of 2008.

4.7 Upgrading Permit Issuance Technology – Accela Automation

Since the implementation of the current permit issuance technology in December, 1999, significant changes and improvements have been made in software development. The growth of the City, increase demand for permits, reducing time to permit and real time access to data requires the City to improve its permit issuance technology.

Funding was secure in the 2008 Budget to migrate from KIVA to Accela Automation, which is web based software with open architecture to allow the City to customize the software for the current and future needs. . This project is anticipated to be a 12 to 18 month process. At the present time, the Department of Information Technology is conducting an assessment of the Bureau of Buildings business processes.

The City of Atlanta, Bureau of Buildings is presently utilizing Accela products (Accela Wireless, KIVA, Accela GIS, KIVA Citizen, etc.) and has determined that the migration will provide additional functionality that the current product does not provide.

Benefits of Accela Automation

- Automate: streamline hundreds of steps involved with the completing a permit, application check-in, plan reviews, fee calculation and collection, inspections and sign-offs, task list and much more. The software pre-completes many of the fields and provides drop-down menus and selections and therefore it reduces the time to input the permit information by staff
- Accela Citizen Access: provides citizens a complete solution from start to finish to on-line services, such as to plan review comments, status of application and enforcement of approval conditions.
- Accela Wireless: remote inspection and results services.
- Accela GIS: gives staff direct access to view geographic representation of all land-use, zoning, and infrastructure information associated with a parcel, permit, or inspection.
- Accela Land Management: tracts and manages all of the land use and development activities including permits, building safety, inspections, reviews, zoning project plans, code enforcement and much more.

Prior to the migration to Accela Automation, the rollout of KIVA 8.12 will be conducted in late July, 2007. New functionality included in the 8.1.2 release includes:

- Users can enter a comment on a professional record
- Permit Shopping Cart allows for the request and payment of multiple permits
- Auto-scheduled inspections can be calculated based on the original scheduled date or the selected inspection or the current system date.
- An administrator can add the scope to the automatic e-mail notification.
- To improve customer use of the On-line Permitting Services, a Permit Shopping Cart will allow the end user to apply and pay for multiple permits. This functionality will be a part of the KIVA 8.12 release scheduled for late July, 2007.

4.9 Co-location of Permitting Reviewers to Bureau of Buildings

One of the major business process changes occurring in FY07 is the relocation of the inspection staff to Garnett Street building to enable the co-location of plan review personnel from other departments involved in the permitting process.

Beginning August, 6, 2007, renovation of the 3rd floor office space will begin in order to create a one stop shop for permitting. The completion of the project is schedule for 4th quarter 2007. The new renovations will:

- Enhance the public space with café like setting to allow customers to conduct their business while having access to the internet, and meet with their associates.
- Incorporate areas for Watershed to co-locate as well as Traffic/Transportation and Fire
- Co-location of plan reviewers from the Departments of Watershed Management-Site Development, Fire, Public Works-Traffic and Transportation to the Bureau of Buildings will create a one stop shop for permitting. This new initiative will eliminate the routing of plans; improve collaboration and communication between plan reviewers, arborist and customers. This process will ultimately result in reducing the City's time to permit as well as cross training opportunities for personnel.

The City has also initiated the 2nd customer satisfaction survey to verify with customer's that their building permitting experience has improved to their satisfaction and that the permitting process is efficient, timely, and transacted with excellent customer service.

All of these initiatives that Mayor Franklin has put in place will provide the tools that Atlanta needs as we experience dramatic growth and economic development while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life Atlantan's have come to appreciate.

6.6. Appendix 5.1 ~ 32 Bain Recommendations and Permitting Improvement Project Team Additions

	Bain Category	Initiative
1	Business Process Improvements	Add additional staff - Inspectors, Plan Reviewers, Customer Service Satisfaction position
2	Business Process Improvements	Business Processes for Intake, Arborist, Zoning, Permit Issuance, CO's, Inspections, BOP, UDC, Site/Water/Sewer, Traffic, SWS, AFD and all that participate in the permitting process
3	Business Process Improvements	Consolidate payments at Revenue Office
4	Business Process Improvements	Constitute a Major Project Team
5	Business Process Improvements	Cross Training of Inspectors: HVAC, Electrical, Elev, and Plumbing, Bldg
6	Business Process Improvements	Develop IGA between the Bureau of Buildings and 3rd Party firm to reduce the backlog of plans
7	Business Process Improvements	Develop SOP's for Plan Reviewers
8	Business Process Improvements	Institutionalize Performance Management
9	Business Process Improvements	Limited plan review function - Hire additional plan reviewers to enable Director/Assist Dir. To Manage
10	Business Process Improvements	Plan Intake by appointment
11	Business Process Improvements	Plan review audits
12	Business Process Improvements	Pre-approved standard plan types
13	Business Process Improvements	Prepare/Review and Improve Business Processes for all Forms and move to Web as a dynamic file
14	Business Process Improvements	Project Team Meetings and Trainings
15	Business Process Improvements	Red flag for re-submittals
16	Business Process Improvements	Redesign BOB Space for short-term, mid-term and long-term needs to accommodate new employees and improvements to business processes
17	Business Process Improvements	Reviewers intake OTC plans
18	Business Process Improvements	Settle Homebuilders Lawsuit -
19	Business Process Improvements	Three part BOB structure
20	Consumer Satisfaction	Monitor satisfaction by telephone and through surveys
21	Customer Service Satisfaction	Add Intake triage role
22	Customer Service Satisfaction	Conduct Consumer Focus Groups
23	Customer Service Satisfaction	Constitute Stakeholder Group to provide input and advocacy for Permitting Improvement Project
24	Customer Service Satisfaction	Consumer policy statement "Consumer Bill of Rights"
25	Customer Service Satisfaction	Create a Permitting Primer
26	Customer Service Satisfaction	Customer Outreach: attend ABA, AIA, Trade Assoc. meetings and provide seminars/workshops

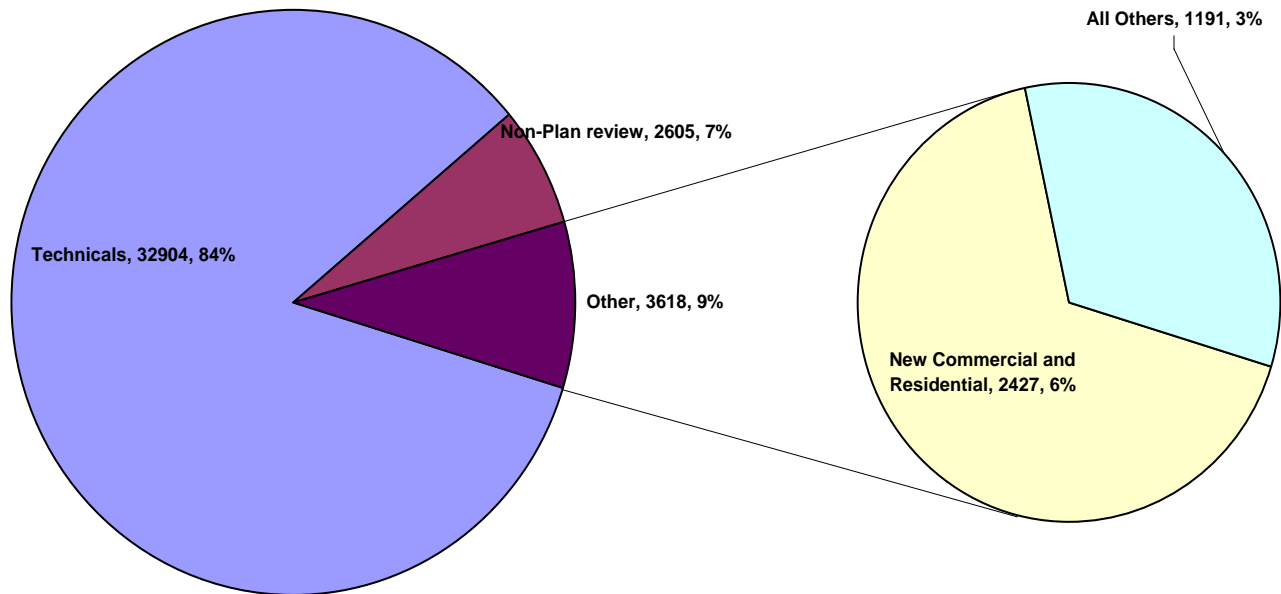
27	Customer Service Satisfaction	Culture Shift and Employee Satisfaction
28	Customer Service Satisfaction	Detailed instructions (revision notes): Create Forms explaining Code Requirements
29	Customer Service Satisfaction	Develop and execute a professional skills training for staff
30	Customer Service Satisfaction	Education Materials: Pamphlets, Newsletter, How-to Packages
31	Customer Service Satisfaction	Expand Customer Service Satisfaction Team to include other divisions including inspections.
32	Customer Service Satisfaction	Formalize pre-meeting between Bldg Plan Reviewers and Developers
33	Customer Service Satisfaction	Move BOB Customer Service Satisfaction
34	Customer Service Satisfaction	Review and Simplify Tree Ordinance
35	Customer Service Satisfaction	Review Zoning Ordinances and Simplify and make user friendly
36	Customer Service Satisfaction	Staff reward program
37	Customer Service Satisfaction	Temporary process concierge: greeter to assist customers / Make Permanent
38	Customer Service Satisfaction	Trade Shows & Trade Publications
39	Internal Communications	Develop Suggestion Box, Newsletter, Policy Notices, Staff Meetings to discuss and review
40	Internal Communications	Retreats
41	Technology Improvements	Accept Multiple Payments online / Accept Checks online
42	Technology Improvements	Add BOB On-Site IT Resources (Kiva Expert)
43	Technology Improvements	Field Automation Implementation
44	Technology Improvements	Implement Data Tracking System
45	Technology Improvements	Implement Digital Plan Submittal/Approval System
46	Technology Improvements	Improve routing methods and hire a Courier
47	Technology Improvements	Install and use GIS layers with the ability for citizens to access information online.
48	Technology Improvements	Maintain Permit Databases: Update Land File & define owners & responsibilities
49	Technology Improvements	Online Business License and Sign License Applications
50	Technology Improvements	Online Permitting
51	Technology Improvements	Provide assistance in setting up phone trees to reduce direct phone calls and increase efficiency and provide basic data and phone lines during facility moves and new hires.
52	Technology Improvements	Provide automatic email functionality for permit activities
53	Technology Improvements	Provide permit status online
54	Technology Improvements	Secretary of State Database Utilization
55	Technology Improvements	Upgrade and Utilize upgrade functionality - Kiva 7.27 and the 8.02

Appendix 5.2 ~ Time to Permit Chart – as of May 31, 2007

Time to Permit - Goals vs. Actual				
PERMIT TYPE	2005	2006	2007	2007 GOAL
NEW RESIDENTIAL	83	52	28	30
RESIDENTIAL - REMODELING	6	1	0	5
RESIDENTIAL - ADDITIONS	39	50	20	21
MULTI-FAMILY	215	91	113	110
NEW COMMERCIAL	147	247	57	70
COMMERCIAL - GENERAL REPAIRS	10	4	5	7
COMMERCIAL - TENNT IMPROVEMENTS	9	7	1	5

Appendix 5.3 ~ Annual Permits Processed, 2006

Permits by type 2006 Year End



Appendix 5.4 ~ Permitting Improvement Project Team

Executive Oversight:

Luz Borrero

Project Oversight:

Department of Planning and Community Development Commissioner Cover

Ibrahim Maslamani, Director, Bureau of Buildings

Joseph Basista, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Watershed Management

Project Management:

Susan McCray, Project Manager, Office of the Mayor

Al W. Martin, On Loan Executive, Georgia Power

Team Members:

Ainsley Caldwell

Alice Wakefield

Ann Heard

Anthony Carter

Anthony James

Audra Myatt

Bob Jones

Brenda Shaw

Catherine Woodling

Charletta Jacks

Chuck Adair

Chuck Shultz

Dena Burress

Diane Barfield

Enrique Bascunana

Gary Donaldson

Huley Barry Dodson Jr.

James Shelby

John Hudson

Karen Cicio

Karen Huebner

Keisha H. Davis

LaMonte Carr

Lemuel Ward

Lorn Whittaker

Lowell Chambers

Louis Rouselle

Mary Ross-Vaughn

Mike Scott

Muriel Dious

Raoul Newman

Roishina Henderson

Shaun Emmons

Steven D. Williams

Sunil Seth

Terry Ellis

Tkeban Jahannes

William Parker

Appendix 5.5 ~ Permitting Improvement Project Stakeholder Group Members

Chair, A.J Robinson, President, Central Atlanta Progress

Stakeholder Group Members:

Amanda Baxter
Troutman Sanders, LLP

Ken Bleakly
Bleakly Advisory Group

Arthur Cohen
Tecton, Inc.

Kevin Curry
Selig Enterprises

Bonnie Dean
Selig Enterprises

Lanorris Nixon
H.J. Russell & Company

Carl Powell
Integral Group

Pamela Smith
Smith Real Estate Services

Claudia Ledwich
Carter

Paul B. Kelman
Central Atlanta Progress

Daniel Sherman
Epstein, Becker & Green, P.C.

Scott Taylor
Carter

David Kirk
Troutman Sanders, LLP

Stephen Fusco
Carter

Dennis McConnell
McConnell Homes

Steve Graff
Hedgewood Properties

Dr. Jane Ammons
Georgia Tech

Steve Selig
Selig Enterprises

Greg Wynn
JLW Development, LLC

Todd Tillman
ANDP

Von Nkosi
ANDP

CITY OF ALANTA

EXECUTIVE

Mayor.....Shirley C. Franklin

LEGISLATIVE

President of Council.....Lisa M. Borders

Members of Council

District 1.....Carla Smith

District 2.....Kwanza Hall

District 3.....Ivory Lee Young, Jr.

District 4.....Cleeta Winslow

District 5.....Natalyn M. Archibong

District 6.....Ann Fauver

District 7.....Howard Shook

District 8.....Clair Muller

District 9.....Felicia Moore

District 10.....C.T. Martin

District 11.....Jim Maddox

District 12.....Joyce M. Shepherd

Members of Council At Large

Post 1 At Large.....Ceasar Mitchell

Post 2 At Large.....Mary Norwood

Post 3 At Large.....H. Lamar Willis